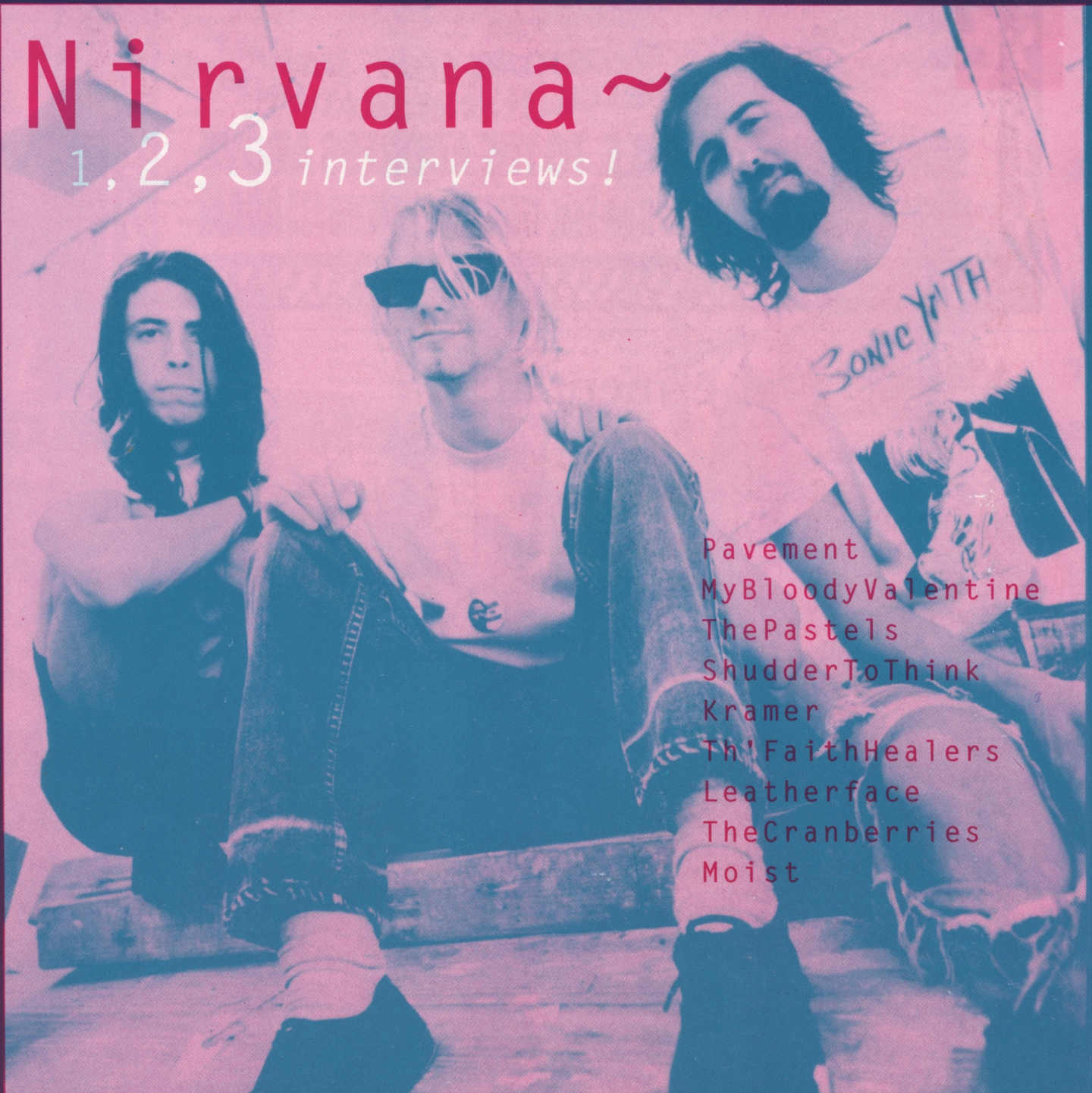


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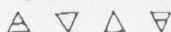
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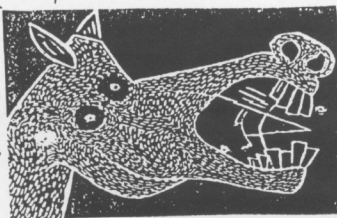


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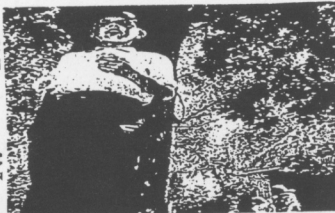


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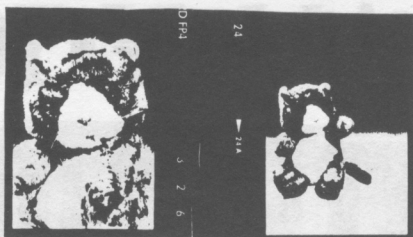
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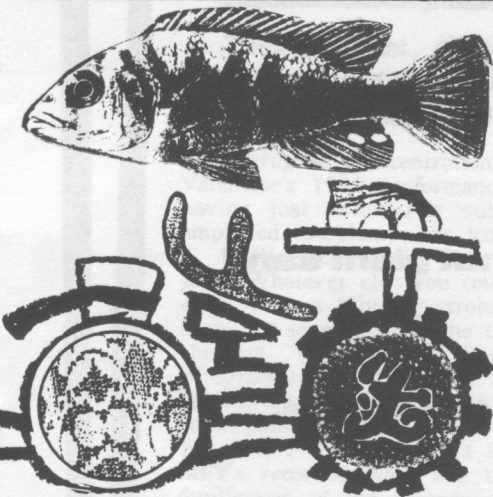
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GLOSSOP COLUMN!

You want exciting rock'n'roll facts? Look elsewhere. This is *Ablaze!* and we spend half of our time in bed. But y'know, all is not mundane, because the other day a reader actually ordered a copy of the Mike Upatea masterpiece (as reviewed in A!8) but confessed that he failed to understand what "delivery not included" was supposed to mean. Don't worry, we've written back with an invitation to collect his 2½" worth Which reminds me, William Downey!, Ms/Mr Packer! and Ms/Mr Lock! You have sent us money but no addresses, so let us know where you live and we'll get your mags to you (no cheating, sneaky kids - we do know the areas but we're not telling you).... Talking of sneakies, the burglars went to Maria's house and lunged at her fab CD collection, but rather than nabbing them they chucked 'em all across the room in disgust. The moral is, Good Taste Saves.... Which reminds me, Gavin B. and Justine W. now have twin nose studs as well as matching haircuts, due to Gav's recent conversion to Nation Of Ulysses style teen rebellion.... The Queen came to see our Bazza and took away a sample of *Ablaze!* style text. The shrewd woman's not gonna subscribe till she's seen some of the goods.... Oh, The Wedding Present haven't split up.... But Micheal Walsh's first LP is going to be called *Kick Him In The Ankle With Injubilation*.... On the subject of names, during negotiations with a certain major label, it's rumoured that suggestions have been made to Sheffield hot groovers ERECTION that they shorten their name to Rection. Said a spokesperson for the band: "Sorry kids, we've dropped an 'E'....Late news: the general erection results are coming in as we type, and the winners are... The Conservative Party. Again. Anyone would think the system was rigged....

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MY BLOODY VALENTINE

Photo: FG



They file past, silent, their pallid faces bowed, as if the very humanity had been bludgeoned out of them, leaving only walking husks, blind stumbling things devoid of personality: shadows, imprints.

Refugees? Concentration camp survivors? Nope, shoegazers actually. The occasion is My Bloody Valentine's 1991 performance at Bradford University, and these eight hundred-odd precious flowers, having just voluntarily subjected themselves to an hour of (let's be honest) badly-mixed, over-amplified cacophony, are looking distinctly wilted.

Still, according to the principle by which all healthy foods taste horrible, it'll have done them good. Whatever else you could say about the My Bloody Valentine live experience, it certainly wasn't cosy. Vicious blinding strobes flickered mercilessly at our eyes for minutes on end, matching sensory blow for sensory blow the thirty kilowatt battering being dealt to our ears. The encore comprised top chestnut "You Made Me Realise", with the oft-imitated (indeed, originally copped from Sonic Youth) aeroplane-taking-off middle bit stretched way beyond meaning and time into a remorseless, formless hammering; the entire audience immolated in searing white light. Now, minutes later, the evening's "entertainment" concluded, we're on our way home, somewhat dazed. Which is where you came in.

Me, I want to take a look at the apparent contradiction between the sensuality and subtlety of MBV's recorded work and the aggressive, one-dimensional live show. It's not that I expect a faithful duplication of the records: that would clearly be a pointless (not to mention, in the case of this particular music, impossible) exercise. It's just that most of tonight's set was so bastard *painful*, in any sense of the word you can think of, and I really don't think it was supposed to be. Let's go and talk to Kevin about it.

"It's about looking at people's faces. Honest...
I know you don't believe half of what I'm saying."

Do you find it difficult to present what is very much a studio music live?

"We don't try to recreate it live. It would be hard if we tried to make it the same, but we don't, so..."

Did you enjoy the gig tonight?

"Really crappy mixed audience reaction, like bad atmosphere... I mean, we were shit. If we're good, and you can tell that people know we're good, that's great; but we were bad and you could tell that people knew it."

Have you rehearsed much for this tour?

"We were rehearsing, but we weren't playing the songs. We were just sorting out the gear, trying to get to grips with some of the stuff we bought. I was only around for four days."

You were phenomenally loud. Don't you think you might be sending lots of people prematurely deaf?

"No, because you need to be exposed to it for a long time to go deaf."

Sorry?

"YOU NEED TO BE EXPOSED TO IT FOR A LONG TIME. It's loud, but not *that* loud. It's more dangerous to wear a Walkman, because when you put a headphone in your ear, the sound pressure levels created in that little space are often a lot higher than at a gig. At a gig what happens is that, as it gets louder, your ears just close down, so you're not actually taking in that much. You can feel it physically, it's really loud, but it's less loud than a club - it sounds worse than it is. Some things that sound pretty mellow can actually seriously do people damage... say if you played a well-produced house track really, really loud; you wouldn't perceive it as being dangerous because it's just (imitates big bass drum) "boom boom boom", but there's transience, the speed of the sound, and if it's really fast your ears can't react. Synthesizers and bleepy things have got really fast transience, much faster than anything I can do with a guitar."

If you imagine it, something that's loud and travels fast, like a snare drum - an electric guitar is comparatively much quieter. It *sounds* louder, because it's lasting, but if you actually measure on a decibel meter, most drummers play at ear damage level the whole time, but because it's fast sounds you don't really notice it; and it's the same with a lot of bleep bleep music. More people are going deaf from going to clubs and listening to dance music on Walkmans than ever would from rock music. I know it doesn't sound true, but it is."

You don't think your tickets should carry health warnings, then?

"No. You can always put earplugs in. Bilinda's got a kid and he wears earplugs. He saw us at Reading. He thought it was gross... I think people get more frightened because they think something might happen, especially when it gets really heavy, the noise thing thing, the rumble, then people think maybe something's going to fall. That's what bothers people. It's quite good, really..."

There was orange stuff flaking off the ceiling during "You Made Me Realise".

"...that would be terrible, though, wouldn't it, if one of those big heavy things went (splat). No, that's not the idea."

What *is* the idea?

"There's no idea, that's the thing. It's easier to say what *isn't* the idea than what *is* the idea."

Come on, you must have some conception of what you want to achieve by doing "You Made Me Realise" with ten minutes of sonic hell in the middle.

"It's about looking at people's faces. Honest, for me, by the way. I know you don't believe half of what I'm saying."

What do you see?

"It's a mixture of things, but nearly everybody's got an expressive expression on. It goes from lots of people just going (looks pissed off), like that, really irritated, like "this is shit, I wish I could go now". There's a hell of a lot of people for whom, like, that's the last straw: they didn't like the gig, and they're like, "well this is really too much, but they don't want to walk out because they don't wanna be seen to be... you know... so they're *bearing* it. There was one girl, you could tell she was in pain. She just wanted to walk away from the P.A."

It's quite a P.A.

"It's the one they use at Wembley Arena, except this is like a tiny part of it. Metallica have got the same P.A. but theirs is 100k and ours is only 30... it's not just volume, though, because you can get a 10k P.A. and make it sound just as loud, but it's more blurry. What freaks people out is it's really loud and clear. Not with us so much, but some of the support bands... like Silverfish, you could hear Lesley's voice perfectly."

The lighting seemed pretty aggressive, too.

"Yeah. It encourages people to close their eyes, by... *ideas*, as opposed to closing them because they think it's horrible. You know, they close them but they think they're missing something."



"Isn't Anything only got one really good review.
When *You Made Me Realise* first came out, all the reviews were condescending."

We moved on to talking about the *Loveless* LP, a record which, despite the glowing reviews it received, was never going to live up to the impossible expectations heaped on it by two years in which *Isn't Anything* became the standard textbook for aspiring indie rockers with no ideas of their own. Myself, I found the record disappointing in that it didn't seem to continue the exploratory direction of tracks on the *Glider* and *Tremolo* EPs, generally sticking to a structurally repetitive rock format; although it's perfectly possible to find pleasure in the rich, layered, guitar/sampler textures and delicious melodies for their own sake. I wondered, on behalf of the poor shoegazey bastards who still haven't got it right, how these sounds were achieved.

"Most of those bendy single-note type things, the melody things, are made up of a mixture of Bilinda's voice and a sample of a flute or something; but not in the way it's supposed to be used - when you use samples properly, you use lots of them spread across the keyboard to give a natural flute sound; but with one sample spread right across the keyboard it takes on different tones, so it's not trying to use it naturally, you know?"

I was a bit disappointed with *Loveless* because the song "To Here Knows When", which was already out on the *Tremolo* EP, seemed to be much the most "out there" piece on the album.

"We're not around to conform to people's idea of what's supposed to be 'out there'. A lot of the stuff on *Loveless* was a lot more radical than the *Tremolo* EP; but it's not *obviously* radical, it's something that most people will never notice. That's why I gave up on the idea of trying to make music for other people, because it's extremely easy to make music to make people think, that's really radical. It's too easy to do things that are seen as avant-garde or progressive."

How is *Loveless* more radical?

"When it comes to sound and things, there's stuff on there that's definitely taking more chances. The interesting thing is that most people's idea of what's different, as far as I can see, is based on something that's more superficial."

Like the mix of a track like "To Here Knows When", is that what you're getting at?

"Well, there's that, but people just presume... they associate lack of form with something... weird or something. It would be really easy - I think I probably will do it sometime, just for the hell of it - to make music that people perceive as extremely radical or innovative or something; but only on a superficial level, because music that really works is music that still *means* something years later, you know what I mean? Initial response isn't the only thing to care about, it's the overall impact. It's when something really means something to you. I mean, you hear a lot of music, pop music in particular, its main purpose is to be *instantly* appealing; while a lot of music that's seen as avant-garde is initially confusing for people, but that's the whole scam of it - you know, a lot of musicians are tricking *themselves* a lot of the time: they do something that they themselves don't feel anything for, but they know it sounds weird, and that leads to a lot of Emperor's New Clothes type situations, where you get people who fool themselves into thinking they're doing something really different, when all they're really doing is something that doesn't connect with themselves; and in turn the people who listen to it don't really know what they're listening to. Like, there were lots of odd weird bands in the early eighties, around the time of the first wave of Factory stuff..."

And those records don't stand up now?

"No, they don't *mean* anything to anybody, because all they were doing was exploring the idea of being something different; whereas Joy Division themselves weren't necessarily doing it just to impress people, and that's why it lasted, that's why it still means something. When people hear it, it doesn't sound fake. It's always the same and it always will be the same. It's something people can't pin down, but it's a kind of honesty: people know when it's there."

"Virtually nobody really knows our genuine history, and some day it'll make a lot more sense to people, especially people who scratched their heads and said, how did they come from "Sunny Sundae Smile" to... you know, other records... in the space of a few years? We have lots of tapes from the very beginnings of the band, which was a hell of a lot more... *traditionally* experimental even than we're seen now. A lot more. We didn't have any ground rules at all. The main instrument was a 4-track portastudio, we just used to have all sorts of stuff on that; mix that live and improvise on top of it. It was interesting enough, but it got kind of boring."

So was that where the sweet pop songs direction came from?

"That was just... yeah, it was lots of things, but it became interesting."

Do you think maybe "direction" is a mistaken concept to apply to somebody's music, anyway?

"It's only a term that's used to help people get a grip on the way they perceive things. I'm not sure it can be worked out mathematically, I don't think many people consciously go in directions as much as people would presume."

You think people just *write what they write*, really?

"Mmmm - to the extent that sometimes people are seen not to change... you know, somebody who makes music may only really hear their *own* music for a long time; whereas somebody who buys music has the opportunity to hear lots of different things. New things can happen to make - whatever, say a certain band - seem a bit outdated, and when that band comes out with a new record it can sound a bit out of time or a bit... kind of, oh god, they're starting to sound old-fashioned; but it doesn't make it *bad*, or take anything away, because placed in the context of time it makes more sense. You see it so often with so many people, where ten years after they release certain records they're seen as very valid, but at the time they were pretty much ignored. *Isn't Anything* only got one really good review. When "You Made Me Realise" first came out all the reviews were condescending."

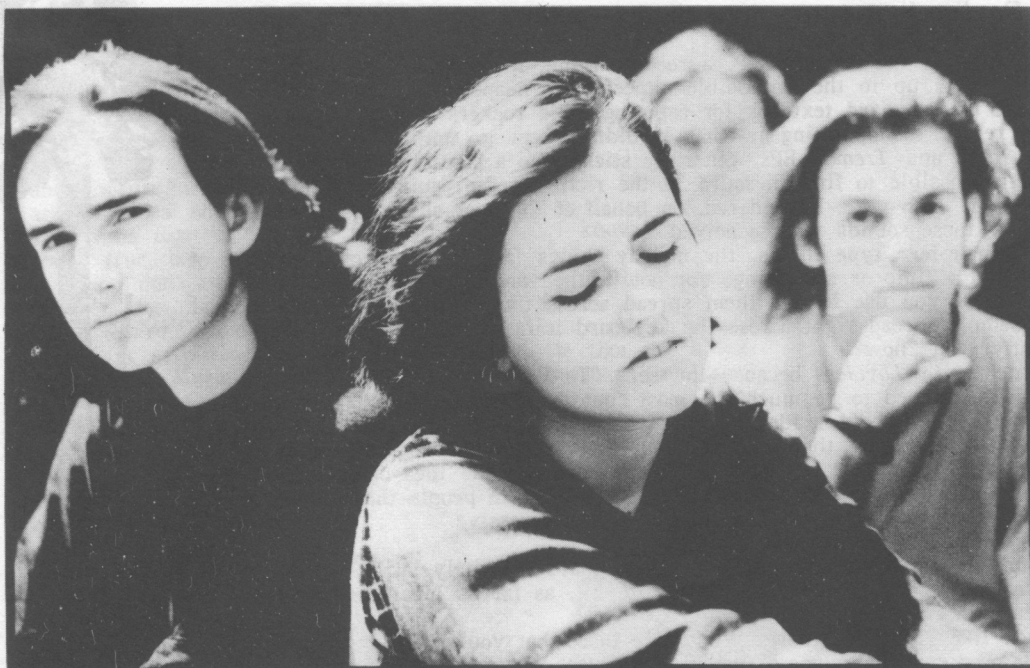
Can you see something funny in being press darlings now, "the most influential indie band in the country" and so forth?

"I don't relate to it because we don't sell that many records compared to some of the other bands."

So it's a manufactured thing; what people are saying rather than what's actually happening?

"Yeah. Maybe. I don't know. I know Ride sell more records than we do. House Of Love sell more records than we do, know what I mean? Ride and House Of Love are bigger than we are, more important, more relevant, et cetera, et cetera. The people who liked us on *Melody Maker* aren't there any more. The people who *really* run *Melody Maker* never did like us, anyway. I've never had any illusions about things like that. It's always a couple of people who start the ball rolling and everyone else basically just wants to be seen to be into the right stuff. There's a huge gap between what the music press writes about and what actually goes on."

→next page→



THE CRANBERRIES ANSWER OUR PANEL'S QUESTIONS

We interviewed the one and a half year old Cranberries when they turned up in Leeds to astonish the kids with Delores' voice (Delores, who has never heard the Sundays, the Cocteau's, the Sugarcubes etc.) and the boys' average, steady, ordinary rock.

Feargal, the bespectacled drummer, was real nice to talk to. Like the other boys, he has great long hair. Mike, the bassist, was either shy or hated us.

The Cranberries are young, they're all between 18 and 20 years old. They're Irish, from a town called Limerick. I tell them of my experience of being on the West Coast and having to travel 50 miles from the rural hills of Connemara just to buy the music press. They promise me that Limerick is not so isolated; they can get the NME there. They are anchored to a studio called Xeric, on Edward Street, which is run by their manager, and is also their record label although they're involved with Island Records in some way.

Q: What kind of music do The Cranberries like?

A: Their favourite band is REM. Delores likes the Stranglers and the Smiths. "We don't like dance music," they say. Feargal also enjoys a bit of reggae.

Q: How often do The Cranberries practice?

A: They practice five days a week. Perhaps, for this reason, they sound like they don't make any mistakes.

Q: What is their reaction to the press attention they've had?

A: "Great - maybe too great," they say, fearing the inevitable backlash.

Q: Delores has frequently been compared to those singers she's never heard. We asked about her singing background.

A: Feargal told that she has not had a formal training in singing, but that she used to sing with the church. Delores is the youngest of a family of girls who are all really into the Cranberries. "They come and sing along at gigs," he tells us. "They think it's great."

Q: What do the Cranberries want?

The bassist smiles. "Jeez, a chance to enjoy life... and fall in love, cos it's the same thing." He adds, self effacingly, "We're softies!"

Q: Where did they get that name?

A: It originates from a previous incarnation of the band, when they were called, somewhat tragically, The Cranberry Saw Us. That's just about the worst band name we've ever heard, we told them.

Q: Would the Cranberries consider leaving their native land to be nearer the industry centre?

A: They confess that they would never move to London, being totally against "ego trip people."

Q: What ideological values do the Cranberries possess?

A: Somewhat naively, they "don't want to let money change us." Because, they explain, when people are influenced by worldly things, what they do doesn't come from the heart. They also believe that "If you're nice to everyone they'll be nice in return."

What can we say? Good luck to them.

→ MY BLOODY VALENTINE →

Do you miss anything about Ireland?

"It's got its good points and its bad points. Basically, if I wanted to be there I'd be there, and I'm not, so..."

Would it be possible to run My Bloody Valentine from there?

"Oh yeah. Dublin is a city that loves rock and roll bands, everybody's in a band there."

There's not much, er, *new music*, if I can call MBV that for a second, though, is there? It's all very trad.

"Yeah, but one of the most influential bands to me were the Virgin Prunes, and they never actually made it to England in their best form. By the time they got to England they were caught up in the sort of Batcave/gothy thing, you know really unfortunate."

They never really sounded like that, though, just looked the part.

"They began to, once they got into the dance thing, having the big thumping beats, from 'Baby Turns Blue', all that period on. They lost something that they had. They were once free, they once could do anything. It's one of the most difficult things for bands to have that freedom *and* be successful enough to have the freedom, which is a Catch 22 that ruins most bands. Our insistence on a certain amount of freedom has completely damaged any kind of commercial success that we could have had."

INTERVIEW BY LUCY NATION



✂ THE CRANBERRIES ✂

a bird of ill omen: THE MABUSES

It had to happen sooner or later. Millions of subconsciously having absorbed some of the most hated eighties pop, it was only a matter of time before, in a typewriters style, the Mabuses should appear. Sooner or later they shouldn't be freaked out by this band. Over and over again, they had to happen.

Yet still we sit around in our hive of music criticism (criticism being, usually, the relevant word) and ask each other *why*, *how* this phenomenon, in a classic voice directing compositions almost Kate Bush-esque in their variety, has come about. We kind of thought everything had already happened. And the last thing any of us expected was a piece of vinyl through the letterbox that was actually quite beautiful.

It's the debut LP of what was, at the time, essentially a one man band, half of the record was produced by Kramer at Noise New York in four days ("he knows the studio inside out"). It was released on Rough Trade, it's called *The Mabuses*, and it will henceforth be known as "The Mabuses LP".

Lukewarm, meaningless reviews in the lame-assed official press did nothing to open the ears of these kidz to the Mabuses. This is where we come in, truth seekin', fuckin' blazin'... I blazed into the appropriate pub not too far after the appropriate time, in god's dog's city of London. Those tube trains had given me harassment to the edges of my motor neurones and the tape recorder Rhodri had kindly equipped me with didn't work (apparently it helps if you put the plug in when you're recharging the batteries). Kim (songwriter, singer, musician) and Jamie (brand new drummer) didn't look all that impressed with me.

Another journalist had advised me that Kim is a *difficult* interviewee, that he answers questions with one-liners (or less), as if to provoke uneasiness. Closer to the truth is that Kim is uneasy *himself*; he's a mumblin', obviously self-conscious about the things he says. He explained his decision to print the lyrics to *The Mabuses* LP, in these terms - it's the only chance he gets to be understood.

Jamie and Kim told me of their plans to get a band together. I asked why, up until now, the Mabuses has been just one person.

"It's just the way it's been. If there were four of me, four identical duplicates, and each could play their instrument well..."

Jamie had an objection: "Ah, but you couldn't drum." As if threatened by Kim's imagination, by impossibilities. Like he needs to feel indispensable. I suggest that, in the world where there are four identical Kims, each would have a good twenty years to learn the instrument of its choice. This would also have the advantage of eliminating the problems of communication with others. The struggle to achieve communication is a constant theme with the Mabuses.

My initial feeling for the Mabuses centred around the most commercial track on the LP, "Kicking A Pigeon". The track is a charismatic rant against nasty, thoughtless, and aggressive feathered creatures and includes cute samples taken from the Hitchcock film *The Birds* ("You eat like a bird... because birds really eat a tremendous lot..."). That we stumbled into a discussion of this one was purely accidental. It was because Kim muttered "I hate that song."

I looked at him, startled.

"It's the one people always ask me about. It's not as if I absolutely despise birds and want to see them all killed..."

Erm... I didn't say you did...

"Well, I do actually."

Huh?

"I hate birds."

Why?

"I don't like their... beaks."

"Enough to make you want to kick the next pigeon you come across" was Judith Crist's review of the film about the lickie boirdies. But really, aren't we taking this ornithophobia a little too far?

Apparently not. Kim especially hates pigeons. "They're just flying rats," he muttered.

Keeping my wits about me I handed him a copy of *The Birds In Yr Garden*, a booklet published by the RSPB. What's wrong with *this*, I demanded, showing him a picture of a tiny little harmless baby wren.

"Well, there's nothing wrong with *that* one," he admitted grudgingly. After a few moments of manic page-flicking he reached

the pigeon page, disappointed to find only nice, middle class style rats with wings.

"Eagles, they're OK, they're majestic at least."

Don't you envy them?

"Because they can fly?"

That's one reason; humans spent ages trying to copy them and eventually came up with aeroplanes, I told them. Jamie tried to get me off the track by insisting that birds and aeroplanes share a basic aerodynamic form. I maintained that one had to copy the other and that they should face the problem - birds really have got something and they're just sublimating their jealousy.

Kim and I were arguing about seagulls. He talks about them as though they're unnecessarily antisocial citizens, the football hooligans of the coastal air.

"I've been attacked by seagulls on several occasions," he lied.

At this point Jamie told us about his chicken problem. His father used to kill them at the farm where he lived as a child; consequently chickens both alive and dead became objects of horror for him. However, I suggest it might also be a reaction to the extreme nature of the body to head size ratio suffered by those beasts.

The Mabuses' name is taken from the titles of a series of Fritz Lang-directed films from a long long time ago. Films about Nazi types. Historically, The Mabuses evolved from The Assassins, Kim's previous band. These names suggest unhealthy fascinations for a young man. Kim wasn't very willing to elaborate.

"Fascination is too strong a word. I'm just interested in how horrible people can be, and what makes them that way. It's just a lot more fun to play the bad guy, I don't want to get too analytical about it."

But there's a big difference between what goes on in the movies and real life.

"Not for me. I don't think there's any separation."

When I tried to figure out what the Mabuses LP sounds like, a reference that came to mind was Prefab Sprout. Kim was horrified;

"I'd hate to be in Prefab Sprout. Too ice cream."

The music they were taking in, though, suggested healthy digestive processes. Jamie noted how brilliantly varied in style the latest Pixie trip, *Trompe le Monde*, was, without sacrificing a coherent vibe to hold the LP together. He contrasted this with the constant mood and style on Nirvana's *Nevermind*. Although the latter is a great LP, he felt that the Mabuses were aiming for the former's kind of multiple genius.

I point out that an awful lot of discussion seems to have taken place concerning the Mabuses' next record, recorded over Xmas at Kramer's new Noise New Jersey studio, and their plans to tour in the spring. At the time of our interview, the band was yet to come together; the *concept* was most surely guiding them. Jamie was into asking me impossible questions, like "what do you think we'll be like live?"

Having honestly thought about it, I decided I didn't have a clue. What do *you* think you'll be like, Jamie and Kim?

"I think that watching bands that aren't in conflict with each other and the audience is boring. I want it to be something that smashes the audience in the face, something they can't ignore."

But when I see a band that's too intense for me, like The Young Gods, I just retreat to the back of the venue where they can't do me any harm.

"At least they provoke a reaction," says Jamie.

Yeah, but it's more like a non-reaction. You could just alienate people by being really confrontational. I decided to illustrate my argument with Aesop's story about the sun and the wind's contest to get the man to take his coat off. You know the one I mean, when the wind was all blustery and certain that it would be able to do it first cos it was really powerful and mean and would win the competition, and it huffed and it puffed and the man just said "brrrr" and pulled his nice warm coat further around him. Now the sun was cleverer, and just did her nice warm thing (pre-skin cancer consciousness), and lo and behold the man started to sweat and so he ripped off his winter gear to bask in the heat.

They seemed to know what I was talking about.

"There'll be sunshine in there too," said Jamie. "It won't be all wind."

The Mabuses: Music for a silent, horrific, but lifelike film. Experience the fucked up weather terror when it comes your way.

NIRVANA

THIS ISSUE'S SELL-OUT SEGMENT
FEATURES THREE NIRVANA
INTERVIEWS FOR THE PRICE OF
ONE... LET THE STORIES UNFOLD...

Last autumn, NIRVANA exploded, all too spectacularly, onto the indierock ultrastar scene. All their dreams came true, and they could barely handle it. Our original attempts to get the interview we'd been promised resulted in our being barred from the building. Despite this strange twist in the obstacle course of life, we managed to get for you not one! not two! but three Nirvana interviews. Sadly, your caring but not-so-daring editor was unable to attend any of them, for fear of hassle scene induced mental illness, but not to worry - you'll get her opinion on the whole caboodle regardless.

DOCUMENT NUMBER ONE, parts a & b →

Notes on recent popmusic explosion:

The best band of 1991? After which all is post Nirvana? And the last tour, the most significant event in history since the Sex Pistols?

Well, '91 was a pretty lean year (it was the one, remember, in which Peel's Festive 50 was abandoned due to lack of interest for the first time in living memory) and in the desert the mirage appears to the most desperate.

The facts you probably already know: originating from Aberdeen, Washington state, they joined with Sub Pop, releasing their first LP *Bleach*, recorded in three days, and enjoying a symbiotic relationship with the label, Tad and Mudhoney. This experience was shared in other towns by other labels and other bands: "I think the idea of being a Sub Pop band is ridiculous, it's like being called a Dischord (Washington DC) or a Touch And Go (Chicago) band." Leaving the label, which was having financial troubles, to join Geffen, they produced *Nevermind*, selling 5 million copies worldwide.

But Nirvana are something fresh and new and their superbly crafted songs on *Nevermind* are no illusion. Human feelings are always mixed, only the simplest souls can pretend otherwise, and Nirvana's lyrics and music capture this beautifully. We

tried to piece together the psyche of the three headed noise monster that is Nirvana from conversations with each of the three heads in turn. If the result is like that of the three blind men examining the elephant, then it reflects on the blind men. [Required explanation provided by Chris Trout: "There are 3 blind men examining an elephant and one of them is at the arse end, someone says 'Hey blind men, tell us what this thing is and you can have something or other', so this one grabs the tail and thinks it's a rope and he's wrong. The second one is underneath it and he thinks it's a big skin thing, and the third one is by its head and thinks it's like a tube. The moral is that if a thing's big you can't understand it by looking at just one bit of it." OK?]

The David Head (tail):

Formerly of Scream, a moderately well known hardcore band of the mid 80's. An experienced tourer, having travelled to the UK four times.

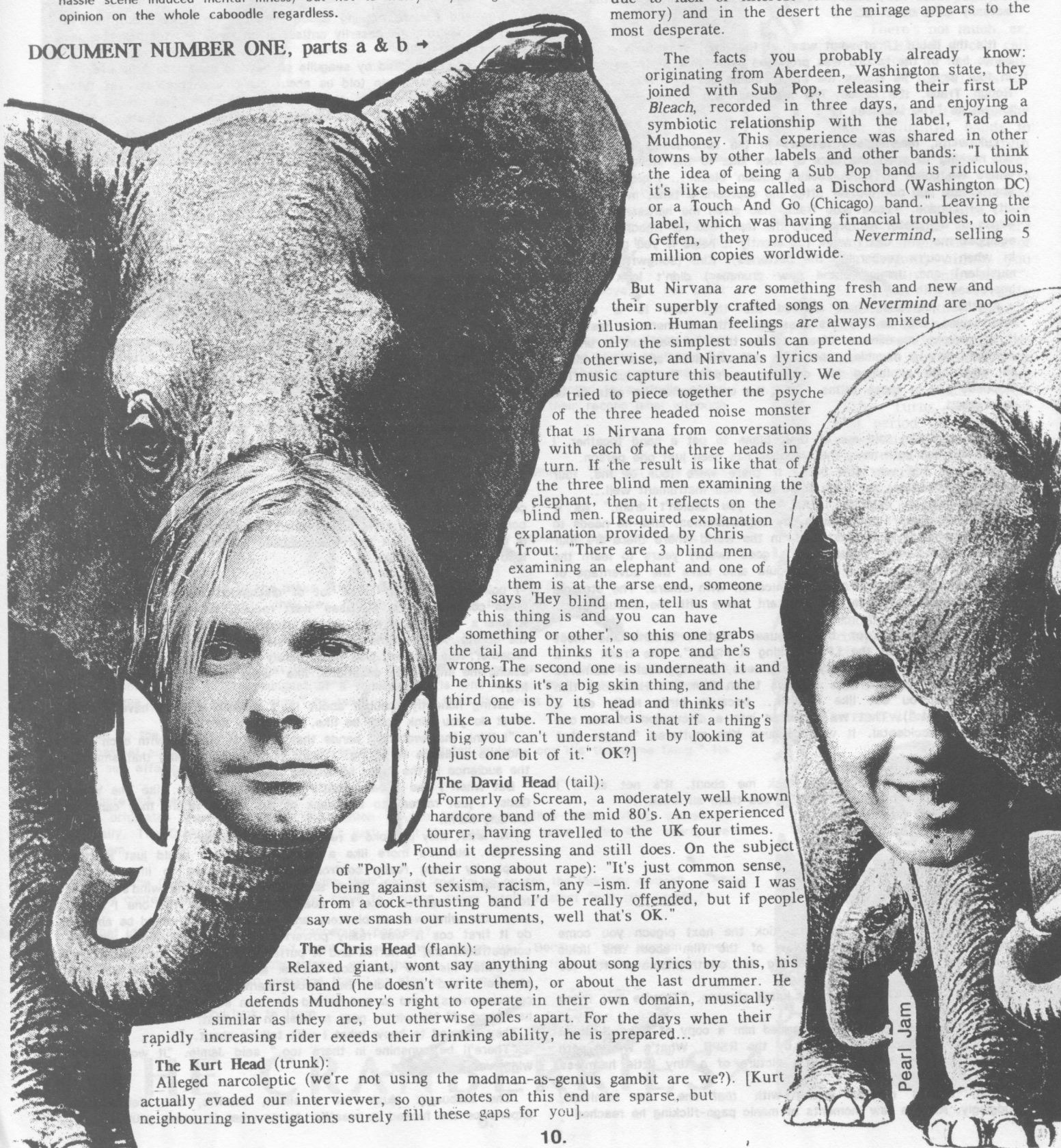
Found it depressing and still does. On the subject of "Polly", (their song about rape): "It's just common sense, being against sexism, racism, any -ism. If anyone said I was from a cock-thrusting band I'd be really offended, but if people say we smash our instruments, well that's OK."

The Chris Head (flank):

Relaxed giant, wont say anything about song lyrics by this, his first band (he doesn't write them), or about the last drummer. He defends Mudhoney's right to operate in their own domain, musically similar as they are, but otherwise poles apart. For the days when their rapidly increasing rider exceeds their drinking ability, he is prepared...

The Kurt Head (trunk):

Alleged narcoleptic (we're not using the madman-as-genius gambit are we?). [Kurt actually evaded our interviewer, so our notes on this end are sparse, but neighbouring investigations surely fill these gaps for you]



They are certainly playing the publicity machine in the same style as punksters of old: the wrong song on the Ross show; the F-word on The Word; going OTT on TOTP. Disclaiming any masterplan for world domination, they are well aware of the system in which they have become enmeshed: "The music press in England (sic) is sensational(ist). They come out once a week and have to have a 'story'. No-one talks about the Canadian music press..."

Watch out - great thirty-toed three-headed noise monster is changing the face of your music industry.

(There follows, as a supplement to this odd shaped animal, a mini interviewette with Chris Novoselic:)

Are you feeling nervous about going onstage?

- Naw, naw, old hat. It's all old hat.

Are you worried about becoming too big too quickly?

- It's already happened. All we can do is just be ourselves. That's it. What else are you going to do? Pretend? Hang around with Bianca Jagger or something?

So are you just going to let things happen?

- No, no, we've got control - we're trying to control what happens. Depends what happens, it's kind of a vague... records are going to sell, people are going to buy them. A lot of the same people who buy Sonic Youth records...

Are you still friends with Tad and Mudhoney?

- Oh yeah, totally. Totally friends. Why not? No, see what we've done is... we've denied our friends and now we hang out with the all the Hollywood crowd, ride Harley-Davidsons, wear bandanas...

I'm not asking you to answer for them, but you seem to be almost poles apart?

- People generalise about the Seattle sound but every band has its own identity, its own sound. Everybody has something to offer. It's not just the same shit.

Were you sad to leave the label?

- Sub Pop? No, we were rather glad to go. It was sad... they had to tear us away from Bruce and Jon; we were screaming, we were writhing... convulsions, tears, uncontrollable.

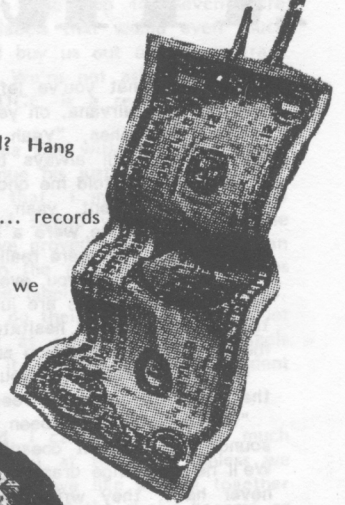
It was just like a separation, like a classic story of three orphaned kids who struggled together and then their welfare agents tear them apart and send them to different foster homes, so they're having this big freak-out, ha ha ha.

What are you going to do as your rider gets bigger and bigger and your drinking capacity levels off?

- These are small cans. I drank a whole bottle of Bordeaux, Beaujolais, who knows? Check into the treatment centre. Go and see a hypnotist. Shock therapy. Anabuse pills, take those. Combination of a few of those treatments... uh-oh, I know: the Ludovico technique,

that's in *A Clockwork Orange*. They'll strap me down in a chair and make me watch Dean Martin movies and Matt Lukin.

Shoot me with drugs, make my



eyes stay open and drop by drop...

How long has David been with you?

- Over a year...

fifteen months. What's this

interview for? (panic)

What happened to your last drummer?

- Oh well, it's like we just had some differences. I don't want to get into any details. It just didn't work out.

- I'd rather read this (*Ablaze!*) than *Q* or *Raw* or...

It's hard work.

- I imagine it is, yeah.

(Finally more alcohol arrives and that's it.)

DOCUMENT NUMBER TWO

I'm stranded on a roof in South Kensington, held hostage by three angst ridden teen spirits. Unless I ask super questions, they'll be answered very slowly, while little old me hangs from the roof edge. Best I sit down, cling to the floor and quietly sip my Coke. Aberdeen's finest are ready.

"My Grandfather used to have this racist joke he'd play. My Grandpa's a dick. He had a black cat called Nigger. He also used to have this joke he thought was real funny, he'd take a bowl of water, put salt in and then he would put dish detergent in it. Then he'd throw pepper in and the dish detergent would make the pepper separate from the salt and he'd say, 'Oh look, buncha niggers just jumped in the swimming pool.'" Kurt's eyes glint with bitter disbelief, as the rest of us look on aghast. "My Grandpa's Archie Bunker, he looks like Brezhnev. He's got colon cancer. He deserves it."

You've done your indie apprenticeship on the Sub Pop label, did you ever expect to go beyond that?

"We never expected to get on Sub Pop, we never even expected to put out a record. At the time we were recording our stuff, we didn't even know Sub Pop existed," states Kurt emphatically. "When we recorded our first demo, we didn't realise they were a label. They'd only put out the Soundgarden and Green River EPs at the time. I didn't take much notice of that stuff. It wasn't like that was our premier goal."

NIRVANA

But now that you've left them, do you think people are going to start saying 'Nirvana, oh yeah, Sub Pop sound'?

Chris screeches, "Yeah, we'll try and break away from that for sure, but they'll always be there. Y'know what 'Jonathon Poneman (Sub Pop guru) told me once? 'Hey, you're always gonna be a Sub Pop band,' and I went, yeah, you're right. We never knew about any Seattle scene, we were a band for a year and a half before we even played there. We were really naïve about the whole thing."

"It's like, have you ever tried to pull a tree stump out of the ground and the roots are just so far down? That stump is Nirvana and the roots..." Dave hesitates as he prepares to execute his trippy metaphor "...are Sub Pop and the earth is the general public."

On the second album you've introduced more of a pop element into the band. Will you ever veer off towards a mellow REM sound?

"We've never really been away from the 'REM sound'. 'About A Girl' sounds like REM. It doesn't matter, so long as we do what we do. We'll never change drastically. I don't see anything wrong with REM, I never have, they write good songs. Nothing bothers me more than people being ignorant about music and only liking one certain style. If someone only listens to hardcore, then they're just as ignorant as the average laymen who only listens to Bruce Springsteen," says Kurt, annoyed.

"There's no big scheme to things either, no big plan plotted out," snorts Dave. "Well, you have *Bleach* which is heavy grunge rock and the *Sliver* single which is clever grunge pop and the *Nevermind* record is a..."

'...collection of REM rip offs.' interjects Kurt with just a hint of sarcasm.

As the whole world seems to be reliving punk (it does? - Ed), do you think Nirvana could ever be part of a whole new punk generation, in the way that you're combining pop melodies with hardcore noise as all the original seventies bands like The Damned, The Clash and The Sex Pistols did?

"Yeah, because those are just like really genuine rock and roll bands, they have a lot of melody, they were wise guys too, and they just fit into the punk scene very well. Y'know what a kind of reaction punk was, it was just to pump some fresh blood into rock and roll when things got stagnant," explains Chris whilst rolling his psychedelic bracelet about the floor. Previously he'd been hammering a metal plate against the wall.

You had quite a reputation as a devastating four piece band - was losing a member (Jason Everman) a major turning point in the sound?

Chris: "We started off as a three piece and were a four piece for about five months. There were only three of us on *Bleach*. We just put his picture and his name on the record, but there's no Jason Everman guitar playing on that album at all."

"We could never hear him live anyway. His amp wasn't loud enough, so we just replaced him with more amps," drawls Kurt, nasty as usual. "Anyway, whenever we play, we've got a cardboard cutout, with a guitar strapped around it and various celebrities' faces stuck on it... so we're still a four piece."

Suddenly there's a major buzz about the band, how can you account for this?

"That's just kinda happened; the people did that, we didn't. We were talking about it and... woaaaahh," Chris shouts, amazed.

Dave continues: "That's one of the things that really bugs me about how, say some band will be together for a couple of years, get all this hype and the press eventually crucifies them because they couldn't live up to the hype, when it wasn't the band that created the hype in the first place, it was the press."

If you could flood MTV with your hits, would you be able to avoid the potential cries of 'sell out'?

"Why would there be any reason not to?" questions Kurt. "Because, as far as I'm concerned, Beat Happening should be number one or the Vaselines or Black Flag. The Sex Pistols should've been for years and had like a blowout."

Does anyone know what number one is?

"Who cares?" demands Chris. "It's just shallow crap. Even if we were number one band, who gives a fuck? Big Deal."

"You always hear about these bands that get asked, 'Where were you when you found out that your song was number one on the charts?' and they say, 'Well, I was takin' a shit when I found out and the shit just fell right outta my ass an' I called up our guitar player and went YEEEEAAHHH." Dave hollers with mock enthusiasm. "It's just so dumb."

On your 1990 tour you dropped your infamous and brutal smash-it-up routine. Why?

"We didn't feel like it. It wasn't on the set list. We just smash up whenever we feel like it. We're not Kiss, they had smoke come out of their guitars, fire, and they spit blood y'know, and that's what was expected of them at their shows everytime you saw them," sighs Kurt.

"But the key to all you bands out there who are looking for that 'smash it up' image," offers Dave, "is to rent equipment, smash it, buy it at a discount rate."

"Usually they sucker you for twice the amount it's worth, though," adds Kurt, with the usual dose of paranoia.

So what does the future hold for Nirvana?

Chris: "We left our crystal ball at home and we can't read tarot cards."



Kurt, in the hands of the public...

Photo: F

Kurt: 'Let's ask Shirley Maclaine. No, better still ask the magic eight ball.'

DOCUMENT NUMBER THREE

When Nirvana hit West Yorkshire, Tony The Woolgar, a chairleg of the odd-shaped piece of furniture known as the Leeds Music Scene, grasped the tape recorder and marched bravely forward, past seething security and tour managers with the springs and wires hanging out of their skulls like the aftermath of a hammer's meeting with a walking talking baby doll, and approached the newly press phobic sex objects Nirvana, specifically Kurt Cobain. Tony had been equipped with a ticket from a Newcastle metro train on which various probing questions were scrawled, and Eugene and Tracee, Leeds' Sleepers, helped him execute the interview (well, whatever they did to it, it certainly didn't escape alive).

"I haven't seen a fanzine since I was a young child," Kurt announces cheekily, upon finding himself confronted with yet another gang of keen kids with tape recorders.

"You've gone really mega, you've sold loads of records," they astutely point out. "What happened?"

"Making It," he divulges. "There was a TV show on ABC at 8 o'clock in the late seventies called *Making it*, it was a disco orientated show...(sings) 'Making it, you've got your chance, you're taking it, come on, come on...'"

HOT VIDEO ACTION

Tracee really likes Kurt's green t-shirt on the "Teen Spirit" vid.

"I haven't been able to bring myself to wear that t-shirt since the video was filmed," Kurt reveals. "Obviously because it's my favourite shirt."



One of Tracee's favourite songs on the new album is 'Lithium'. "To me it sounds like it's something to do with religion, taking drugs and being brainwashed," she says.

"Yeah, all that bohemian shit," Kurt agrees.

"So what is it actually about?"

"Well, the way that I picture it, the visual part of the song would be the skinny, long legged puppet from the Brothers Quay...you ever see a Brothers Quay movie? Well, they're these guys who pose as Eastern Europeans but they're typical bohemian art students from Philadelphia but they like to put out the image that they're from Eastern Europe and most of their short films are about ten minutes long and they have these really old-looking puppets that move around in a surreal way and they pick up screws out of the ground and it's really dirty and beautiful and that's what I pictured for this song when I was

writing the lyrics. Really there's no meaning at all. Hopefully when we do our video, because that will be our next single, (It wasn't. - Ed) we'll hire the Brothers Quay if we can hunt them down."

ON NEPOTISM AND SELLING OUT

Nirvana do a lot to promote other bands. They took their favourites, Captain America (ex-Vaselines), from Scotland, and Shonen Knife, from Japan, on their big tour with them. Tony asks whether the latter are popular in their native land.

"No, I don't think so. I don't think they're really popular anywhere other than in a cult sense in America, a very small group of people like them, but it's obvious they made everybody in the whole place tonight very happy, everyone was just smiling."

They ask whether Nirvana will bring out a single with Seminal Twang, a fave label.

"I feel a special bonding with Dave (ST boss) even though I've never met him. Everything he's put out I've totally loved, y'know, Daniel Johnson stuff, The Vaselines, I mean, wow!"

"How many people like The Vaselines in America? Are they a cult band?"

"I don't think we're really aware of The Vaselines in the States but that's not very surprising when a band don't have the privilege of promoting or distributing their music. But then again, maybe it's so sincere that they just wanted to put out a record, that they wanted to record together and write some songs."

"Do you think that's something which may not be part of Nirvana anymore, because of the fact that you're getting bigger and bigger?" they ask. "It must be really frightening." This is in fact Kurt's cue to talk about his justifications for being on a major label.

"It's not so much frightening as it is embarrassing because really we'd be just as happy playing together in our basement, we really would. But at the time we were on Sub Pop we thought there were too many people coming up to us after shows saying 'We can't find your records', so we just decided to go onto another label and we were under contract to Sub Pop for seven more years, so there were no independent labels that would even touch us, there was no way that they could buy us out of the contract so we had to go onto a major label. We're not ashamed of that, we're quite pleased with it because DGC is a really good major label."

"Is it true that Mudhoney were gonna sign with Geffen because you did?" A chance for Kurt to continue his justifications.

"It doesn't have much to do with that. I mean it could have something to do with that because we signed with DGC because Sonic Youth joined, which means they've proved they can handle an independent band and promote them in the right way. But besides the fact that Sonic Youth were on the label; the people at DGC, they just convinced us that they could do their job. There are a lot of people at DGC who have worked at other independent labels before, so they're totally aware of it, they're very independent orientated."

"So you're happy anyway?"

"Yeah, sure. I've made my own bed, I can't complain too much because there's nothing I can do about it at this point unless we break up; and we don't want to do that, we like playing together still. I mean, if it gets too out of hand, and the shows become so huge that we don't feel that it's very personal anymore, we'll just break up and change our name and start over again and hopefully we'll write good songs."

IDIOCY

"It's not true about the turtle farm is it?" (Our reporters have been doing their homework.)

"What?"

"I read an interview that said you had a turtle farm," they say.

"You're English, aren't you? You're aware of the English papers. It's as simple as that, I mean, I don't have to say anything more..."

While Tracee and Eugene casually slander Everett True, the subject of The British Music Press arises. And Kurt is upset.

"Every article that's been written about us has been so completely exaggerated, taking things so literally. In an NME article [written by Mary Ann Hobbs], they took a quote out of another one months before, and the quote was exaggerated and rewritten and she took that right out and I mean, we sat around for two hours and gave her, in my opinion, pretty good statements but she only used a few of them and she reworded all of it, every bit that came out of my mouth was completely reworded. And I don't mean to be so picky about it, I don't like to look at everything and analyse it and say, 'This is wrong', but it's so ridiculous when something is written about us in these major papers that it's really distressing."

PUNK ROCK

"Which punk rock bands were you into, then? What made you start off?" This is Kurt's cue to slag off straight edge.

"Stuff that made me start off was stuff like the Butthole Surfers and Scratch Acid and Flipper, very noisy bands, because that was really the time when hardcore was very big in America, this straight edge and very philosophical type of music... they don't have sex, they don't smoke cigarettes, they don't drink, I mean it's fine if somebody wants to do that, to promote it to such an extreme but it's offensive to me."

"So did these hardcore bands make you start writing?"

"The hardcore bands made me rebel against the very typical form of punk rock at the time. I tried to find other bands that were subversive to that kind of music; like Flipper, Butthole Surfers and Scratch Acid were bands that were completely the opposite, they were very much more like '77 punk rock when

Credits:

Interview 1 conducted and written by Patrick Courtney
Interview 2 conducted and written by Jeremy Abbott
Interview 3 conducted by Tracee and Eugene Sleep and Tony Woolgar, transcribed by Ian Cheek and assembled by Karren A!

NIRVANA

things were a bit more open. The stuff I've been into in the last few years is different, even though I still really like those bands, but I've been listening to The Raincoats and Half Japanese and Jad Fair and Beat Happening, Kleenex, The Marine Girls, Slits, a lot of English bands from the early 80's."

"It's really strange because a lot of your music is quite melodic really."

"Yeah, people would expect us to be listening to Godflesh... I mean, I don't have anything against them but it's just not my cup of tea. Most people would expect us to be listening to nothing but grunge music all the time, so they have no idea we like melodic pop music."

REAL LIFE

In response to what must have been a question about their reaction to Freddie Mercury's death from AIDS, which had occurred a couple of days earlier, he says,

"I started getting into Queen, sort of in a jokey way, and I went out and bought this Queen's *Greatest Hits* tape at a truckstop and I was just getting into it and then, *bam*, Freddy's dead... It's sorta weird, cos Magic Johnson, the famous basketball player, got AIDS and it sort of slapped everyone into reality - 'oh my god, *normal* people can get aids too!' The fact is, although he's always had a reputation for being homosexual, he could equally have got it from a woman, or from shooting drugs. You just wait till President Bush gets AIDS, and then maybe the bullshit'll be turned around a little bit..."

This sojourn into reality proves a little taxing. Kurt is asked whether he likes The Pastels.

"Yes, I like The Pastels," he says.

Eugene looks at the ticket and says, "What are you going to do on Top Of The Pops?"

"Either we'll do the thing that everyone expects us to do, or we'll, erm... I have no idea, we've only had five hours' sleep in the last two days and we're supposed to do it tomorrow morning. If the vocals are lypsych, we'll be able to fuck it up even more..."

"Are you gonna do a Kylie?" asks Tracee.

"What's that?"

"Kylie Minogue, she goes on in bondage outfits."

"We'll decide tomorrow morning, it'll depend what mood we're in."

The performance in question proved to be a historical, inspired, adrenaline rush of an event, extra wonderful for the fact that dull establishment TV was being subverted so joyfully. They made no attempt to play out the well known lie, but held their guitars above their heads, threw them around a bit, and the kids leapt onstage in a beautiful surge. After which, the presenters were their usual grinning idiot selves and carried on as if nothing had happened.

COMPLETE AWFULNESS

"Did you have a happy childhood?" asks Eugene.

"A very happy childhood, yes indeed."

"Were your parents into rock music as well?"

"No, my parents weren't into rock music, not at all. My parents..."

He was interrupted by someone, then was asked something else, and the next round in the competition to see who could be the most unprofessional interviewer began.

"What are your favourite pets?"

"I got a very definite bonding with cats," replies Kurt.

"Yeah cats, especially charcoal grey," says Tracee. "I'd really like a charcoal grey cat. But I'm not allowed because..." (goes on at length about why she can't have a cat). "Do you have pet cats?"

"I can't keep cats any more," says Kurt. "I'm on tour so often I can't afford to pay my friends to feed them and take care of them."

"What would you call a cat?"

"Alien."

"I would call my cat Dollyrocker. It's a Syd Barret song, it goes 'Dollyrocker, Dollyrocker, Dollyrocker.' It's just a cool name, I'd rather be called Dollyrocker instead of Tracy. My mother called me Tracy," says Tracee. "My mother has no imagination, she went to the movies a lot so she called me Tracy after Spencer Tracy, and that's so shit, she could have called me something better, she could have called me Dollyrocker. Anyway, shall we change the subject?"

"Yeah."

"Sorry."

SCARY IMAGE MACHINE

"Why are you so scruffy?" asks Eugene the question asker. "You don't need to answer that one cos you've only had five hours sleep!" he immediately decides. But Eugene, my faint astral projection whispers, I wrote the question before seeing them this evening - I wrote the question because all their press shots show them as the messiest looking band alive... oh, nevermind.

On a less visual theme though, there've been conflicting reports about Nirvana: on the one hand there's the 'New Age' man dealing with issues responsibly, and on the other they're smashing everything up.

"It's part of human nature to appreciate all forms of emotion and to not deny any of them; if you're a true person you shouldn't deny any of them. You shouldn't feel that you should go in one specific direction to promote the image of your band. We like to fuck off, we like to have fun and we also care sincerely about specific things that affect us..."

"So what makes you want to smash things up?" they ask, concerned.

"Well, actually there's the fun side of it..." Kurt giggles.

"How do you prefer to be portrayed?"

"Just like this" Kurt says. "As the sensitive artist type, the frontman with long blond hair."

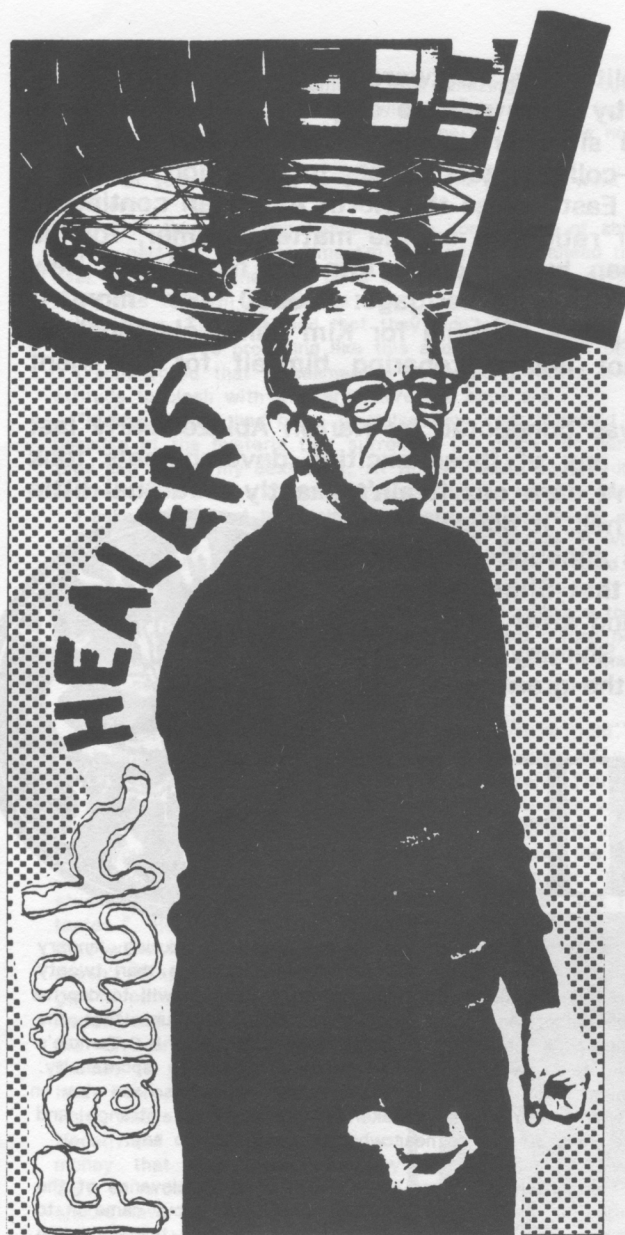
THE END

Everyone gasps, and the tape recorder is turned off.

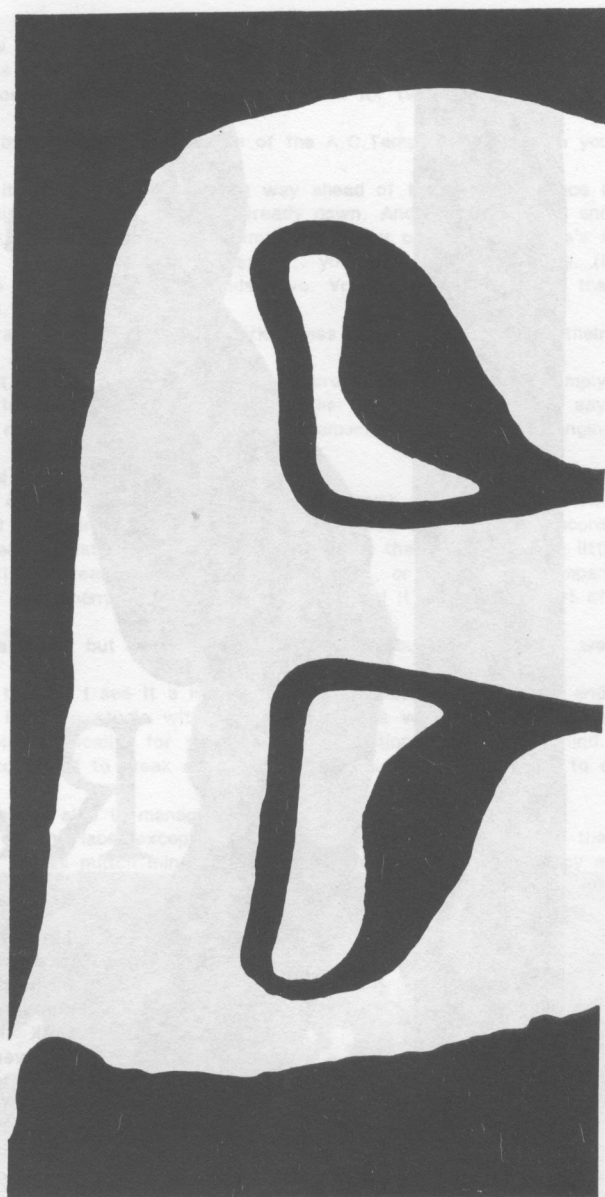
The editor scrawls...

Nirvana have performed a cool trick: playing fine tunes with heavying guitars without the sexism and homophobia that we had previously believed to be an integral part of the genre - the new metal man washes this many more dishes.

As a latecomer and an early leaver, I managed to become a fan of Nirvana, and then a cynic, in the space of a month. But who cares? All the marketing scum and dependednt journalists want to know now is, who's The Next (Real) Nirvana? We don't mind. if they pick off our favourite rockin' brothers (and sisters? unlikely) for the corporate destruction scene, as long as you kids are happy. That's all that matters....



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th' faith healers

SWITCHED ON STEREO LAB

Pop Song
Delores
Slag
Reptile Snake
Lovely
Gorgeous Blue
Not a Good

1. SUPER - ELECTRIC
2. DOUBT
3. AU GRAND JOUR¹
4. THE WAY WILL BE OPENING
5. BRITTLE
6. CONTACT
7. AU GRAND JOUR
8. HIGH EXPECTATION
9. THE LIGHT THAT WILL CEASE TO FAIL
10. CHANGER

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CATALOGUE NO.S STEREO LAB 31022, TH' FAITH HEALERS 31023

P E R V E R T I N G T H E C O U R S E O F P O P

Bongwater's split was outwardly a low-key affair, uncommemorated by press release or public statement. That the reality of the situation involves considerable acrimony between the ex-collaborators (not to mention lawsuits winging their way East across the North American continent) might explain their reticence on the matter. Kramer, for his own part, has been busy moving into his new Noise New Jersey 24-track studio (mortgage: \$5000 per month); producing new Mabuses material for Kim Fahy; playing bass for Ween and, not least, preparing himself for imminent fatherhood.

This interview was conducted by Karren Ablazel early last year, long before any of these exciting developments took place; but we don't care cuz it ain't exactly a factual little number anyway... hell, it doesn't even touch on Kramer's announcement, later in the year, that Shimmydisc will cease to expand after catalogue number Shimmy 100 is released because the great man is "getting bored"...



KRAMER

Kramer is producing the fourth A.C.Temple LP in Axis Studio, Sheffield, during January 1991 when I first meet him. He says we can do a short interview, no more than twenty minutes. Maybe he doesn't want to talk too much. But this is like an addict's will to deprive themselves of the all important substance: he seems to *enjoy* talking so much that the interview goes on for nearly an hour. Or maybe he doesn't want to cut into A.C.Temple's work time, already whittled down to a week by Kramer's preferences for spontaneity. However the band are happily engaged in other pursuits, table tennis included, so we stay on in the control room; I the listener, Kramer the speaker of many things strange and wonderful. I let the interview drift, being pleased to hear what this man has to say.

He had been crooning some old toons I'd never heard, to demonstrate the relevance of the works of 70's prog rock act America to the then current Gulf War. Chris Trout came in to ask if we wanted cups of tea. Kramer was going to some lengths to explain that he'd like four sugars in his but only if it could be kept a secret (whoops!), when he realised that he was "rambling eccentrically". He said he wondered why anyone put up with him. I told him he was quite entertaining. His response, culled from the film *Goodfellas*, was to exclaim

"Entertaining? You think I'm here to fuckin' amuse you?"

This led him to ask me (hey, who's in charge here?) whether I go to the movies at all. I told him that I tend not to, being more of a book person, which wasn't to say that I think people have to be a one-type-of-medium person or another. However I used the point to ask if he thinks he's predominantly a book person or a film person, or whatever.

"I'm an everything person and for freedom of choice, and I think people should certainly have the right to see good movies (the only decent Sheffield cinema had recently closed) and I think they should be made again. Even though the movie isn't much of a form of expression nowadays it used to be an amazing thing. Have you ever seen *Blood of the Poet* by Jean Cocteau? You ever see *Citizen Kane*?"

I shake my head, twice.

"Great things happen on film, greater things often than happen in music, it's something much more universal. I couldn't talk to my father when he was alive about any of the records I did but I could certainly talk to him about *Citizen Kane*. That just means it's something that gets a little deeper into society than the music we're about to talk about, I guess. So yeah, I'm really into movies and my advice to you is that if you're interested in the subject of, err, humanity, go to the movies. And try to support the cinema because video is sort of wiping out film."

Putting on my devil's advocate hat I asked him why it should matter whether films are watched in cinemas or not.

"Because that's the way they were intended to be seen. Obviously you can open a book and see a picture of the Mona Lisa but I don't think the guy that painted it wanted it to be seen reproduced all over the world, I think he wanted people to stand in front of it and feel what it was about. And a movie house is a great place to see things - sit in the front row so that your entire field of vision is taken up by the screen, and if you can see it in the afternoon, ask the projectionist to turn it up loud so that there's nothing else, no seats behind you or beside you or in front of you, just the screen and the experiences it tethers forth. And if you're seeing a great film you're seeing something that can change your life as a certain kind of good book can change your life. A lot of books in my youth changed my life but after I turned 22 I don't think I could name a book that had the kind of effect on me that dozens of movies have had. I go to the movies a lot."

I asked him about the books. He told me that Thomas Pynchon is an American poet who belongs to the movement of writers who "wound up freeing words from the constraints that held them for many centuries." Quite how this occurred I've yet to discover, having only read one work of his, one which did no such thing as far as I could tell. His contemporaries, according to Kramer, were people like James Joyce and Yeats, and the only successor in such work is Charles Olson, "who wrote a series of books called *The Maximus Poems* which had a real strong effect on me."

"I guess my favourite American writer is Herman Melville - you ever read *Moby Dick*? [I haven't.] The guy spends an entire chapter talking about the minutest detail of a ship in such descriptive prose that it can sort of transpose you into that sort of time, you feel like you're at sea..."

On to the Kramer phenomenon, his amazing career culminating in the Noise New York studio and Shimmydisc label of impressively vast and qualityful output. You've worked with so many people, haven't you? His response was brief, perhaps due to boredom with the topic.

"That's because of the amount of time involved. It's not like I've done it in two or three years, I've been doing this for twelve, thirteen years now."

Part of your reputation as a producer is that you work rather quickly, illustrated by the speedy production of the A.C. Temple LP here. Are you impatient?

"I don't think it's impatience. It's a combination of about half a dozen factors. It's just that I'm thinking way ahead of the band and once I hear a part for the first time I'm thinking so far ahead that, on the 24 track machine inside my head it's already down. And hearing it over and over again can sometimes be a bit frustrating. One of the other factors is money: whether I'm spending my own money or somebody else's I really like to form a schedule and a budget and come in 25% under. I don't think I ever really rush a session... you could ask A.C. Temple. (I asked them. They testified that they didn't feel rushed.) It's just a question of the smoothness which bands have. You form a rapport with the band when you're producing like this and then you sort of glide on that, like a wave."

I commented that it seemed to be working rather well. Given the band's general intensity and hard workingness I'd actually expected their attitude to clash with Kramer's more laid back one.

"Maybe if they had come to Noise New York it would have been a little different, it would have been a more hardworking atmosphere, simply because of the hysteria that surrounds the place. So here is the best atmosphere for me to work - any studio other than Noise - I would say they had me at my best here. At Noise I could always divide the time but I would never be able to promise that someone wouldn't come banging on the studio door with an emergency that I'd have to face."

I asked him about his feelings on being the age he is, and how he thinks he'll feel when he's older.

"I'm 32 and I seem to have a good clear picture of what I'd like to be doing at 42 and it doesn't really have very much to do with what I'm doing now, though I'm resigned to the fact that I could very easily be doing what I'm doing now. I'd like to travel more and hear and record different kinds of music and work with different kinds of musicians, but I have a feeling that the record company and all that has become a little too much of a success and I'll either have to embrace the company and stick with it and really put all my energy into it, or release the company and take my life back and start being a private human being again because running a company is a very public thing. And it's not really part of making the music; many times it comes in the way of making the music."

That seems to be the problem with running a label - you do it because of the music but end up bogged down with business. (I think we missed each other here, somehow.)

"Well, if having a job is business I guess you're right. Often having a job isn't, though. I see it a little more as just taking out an easel and stretching out a new piece of canvas every couple of weeks or so when you go into the studio with another band. It's very easy to achieve burnout if you do it too much, too consecutively. You need vacations, not just physiologically, for your ears; but emotionally, for your mind. Fortunately in the last few years there's been enough work so that I've been able to afford to break away from it periodically. I always try to do production jobs at the end of trips or at the beginning of trips."

If you were to do something else could you give the label and studio over to someone else to manage?

"Nobody else could do it and carry on the flavour. There's no-one else involved in the label except for my assistant who assists me in the studio and with boxing records and things like that, but I don't know anyone whose tastes match mine and right now the label is flavoured by my tastes." He went on to explain that while he puts out nothing he doesn't like, sometimes he doesn't get to put out stuff he does like. Negativland came to him with their U2 LP already recorded, asking Kramer to release it because SST had been messing them about. This move, however, led to Negativland being given lots of money that they were owed by SST in order that their old label should have the privilege of putting out this record, "one of the greatest records ever" says a disappointed Kramer, although he's pleased for the band.

It shouldn't matter who does it as long as it comes out, I commented, although you (one) would always like to think you were behind something which you feel is so good.

"There is a certain ego gratification, I guess, to knowing that a certain record is out either because of two months you spent in the studio or half a dozen cheques you signed. In the case of U2 it would have been the latter, simply negotiating it and paying for the manufacture of it, but still

that's something to be proud of because the catalogue is something to be proud of, you look back on the catalogue as the body of work. Because if Shimmydisc had only released four or six records, believe me, you would not be sitting here interviewing me now."

This isn't necessarily true. Not at all. This is the first time a label boss has been interviewed in *Ablaze!*, or a record producer: we always go for musicians, and then tend to interview them as human beings. But I didn't think to tell Kramer this. So...

"Bulk lends credibility. I don't really think it matters how good what you do is, it's often how it's arranged and presented. I know a lot of music that's really really great, but because it stands by itself as the singular release on one label... err, actually I'm kind of rambling, why don't you ask me another?"

OK. Well, the stuff you do sounds pretty exhilarating, it's like you've organised your life so you can do just what you want to do.

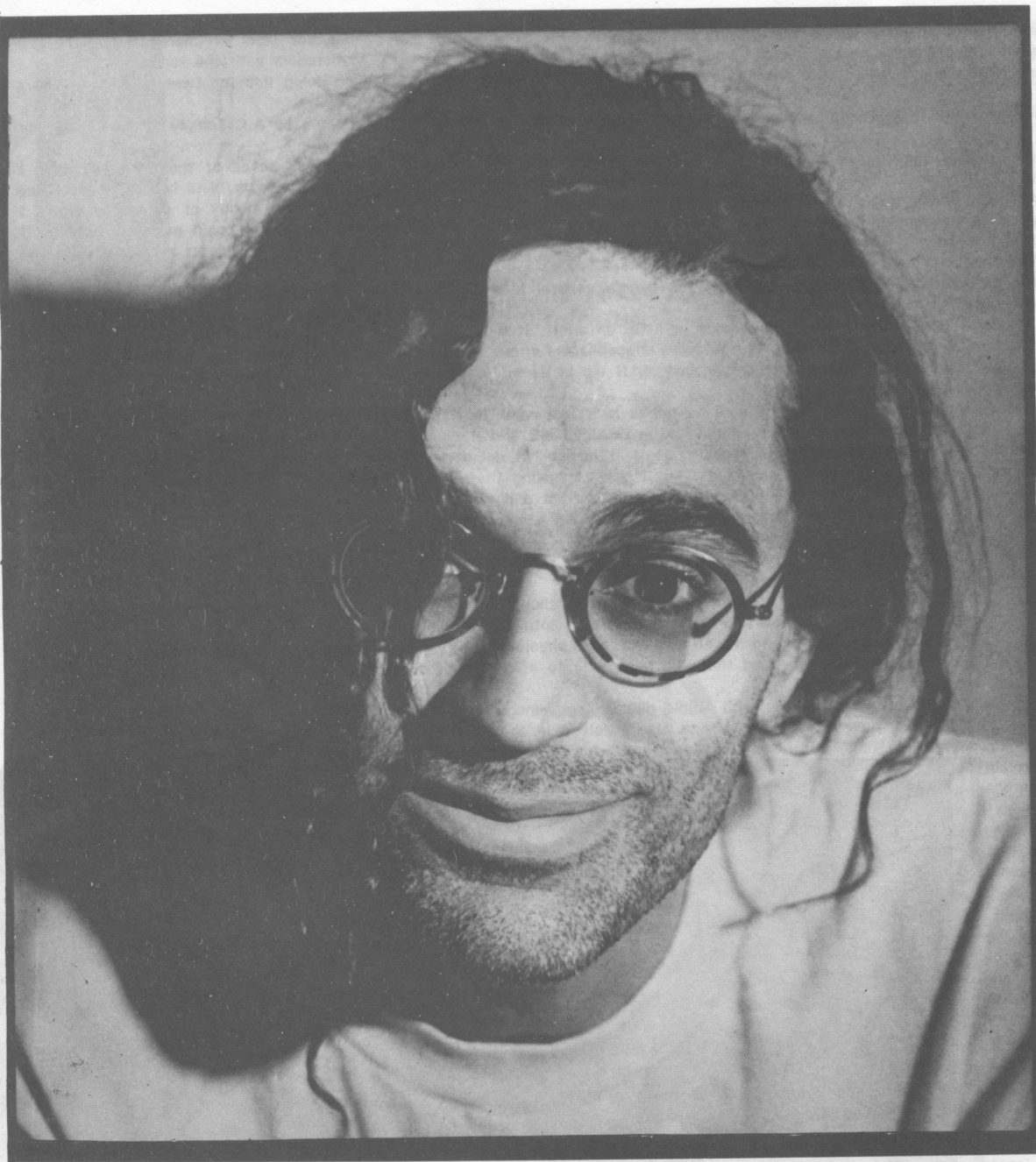
"Travel around making records, yeah."

D'you think you appreciate it, or are you unsatisfied?

"Part of the reason I'm here is that I'm ambitious, I guess. The ambition doesn't die away... though now I don't really really really want to be doing anything; there are a few people I'd like to really really produce, like Robert Wyatt, but aside from that there's nothing else in music that I'd really really like to do except to be able to do my own music freely."



Photo: FG



We discussed Kramer's connection with A. C. Temple. He told me about how he met Noel when he was doing the sound on Galaxie 500's European tour the year before and Noel was the tour manager. They started talking about music and Kramer found he had an instant affinity with him, which was helped by them being close age-wise.

"I know that might sound silly but when you're 32 years old and everyone coming to these clubs is like *your* (i.e. my) age, it really does start to make a difference. A lot of the people who come to see me now are half my age and I only recently got out of bed and realised that. Up 'till now I thought I was playing for me, now I'm playing for "the kids". That's why I don't wear funny hair, or dress funny..."

Kramer had, at the time, fairly long dark hair which he kept in one plait behind his head. His clothes were so unremarkable that I've forgotten what they were. So I asked him, is this conservatism intended to separate you from your younger fans?

"No. I've just never created an image for myself, I didn't go into an eyeglass store and say "Won't these look cool on stage?" (He wears small round unobtrusive ones.) And I didn't cut my hair funny or put a thing in my nose... I guess what I'm trying to say is that I'm

uncomfortable with the idea of a musician being a star, I've always laughed at stars. Aside from a few musicians that I've idolised... I mean, I might have looked up to Eno, but his whole early period was a parody of that whole glam thing and I thought that was an incredible satire of the whole thing, that really wrapped up everything I loved and hated about rock'n'roll. I've never tried to put myself forward as a star, yet somehow the label and the music and all this makes people stand in front of me on stage and stare at me funny, or ask for my autograph, although I realise that to refuse to sign an autograph is the wrong thing to do."

Because it would be rude?

"Also because it accomplishes the opposite purpose to what I'm trying to do, it separates me from them. If I'm the same as them and they just want my autograph, why shouldn't I give it to them?"

But can't your signing an autograph be seen as an admission that you're on a totally different level from them?

"Well then maybe I can help them see that they're wrong by just talking to them and giving them what they want. Maybe if I walk away and turn my back and don't sign the autograph it will enhance their image of that pop idol who can't be touched and who won't even communicate with them. I think the most damaging thing about rock'n'roll is what it's done to the average person trying to grow up in this world."

If it wasn't rock music it would be something else.

"Like James Dean, a movie image. But at least that really is pure fantasy. I mean you can grow up wanting to be an actor, that's one thing, but it's another thing for an entire nation, or half the world, to grow up wanting to be Van Halen, which is what MTV has begun to accomplish. When I was growing up, my cousin was the only person I knew who was in a band, and they played music by the Doors, but when I was a little older I was (in) one of the two garage bands in the neighbourhood. Now, everybody plays the fuckin' guitar, everybody writes songs, everyone is in a band, everywhere, every basement, every apartment has a rehearsal studio."

Is that really so bad?

"It's a proliferation of, erm, wannabe-ism, I think there are more people out there who wanna be stars than wanna be good songwriters or good composers or good musicians. Even though I acknowledge that part of rock'n'roll is live fast, live hard, die young and all that stuff, there is an art form here. We are honing an art form and hopefully we're getting better and better at it, at least that's why I'm here. I'm not just here to get to the next paycheque. I'm here to keep getting better at this, and as soon as I realise that I'm not writing good songs anymore or being a better producer from record to record, that's when I stop."

Kramer's got a solution to rock wannabe-ism:

"Y'know those little booths that provide background music for anyone who wants to go in and sing? You go into a storefront and spend \$5 to put your voice down over a Michael Jackson backing tape. I think it would be wonderful if every kid in every city could get that thing outta their system when they needed to, if anyone who had the idea about growing up and doing that kind of thing could just get into one of these booths and do this a few times and waste a little money, I think we might have a few more good musicians roaming around; but of course that's wishful thinking, because in the future everyone will be a jack of all trades, everyone will be a poet, everyone will be a writer, everyone will be a star for at least fifteen minutes, as the gods wished it to be. Everyone will be a musician, everyone will speak many languages..."

Alarmed at this rapidly opening utopian vista I asked: You what?? How come?

"Because in an ideal society that's what education will come to. We'll be able to throw away the trappings of work, even though I personally believe that physical work is part of the path, part of the way to get to wherever we're going. The future of society is probably not going to be a very aerobic one."

You're saying that you believe such a society is possible?

"Yeah."

But what's going to bring it about?

"A few centuries. Just time. I mean, obviously we're in a rut now. A few hundred years ago people died of the black plague. That's a horrible thing, hundreds of people lying out in front of you with their innards split right open and being eaten alive by creatures, y'know, horrible purgatorial type descriptions. There's probably some more of that in our future before we get to a state of more oneness with ourselves. But I do think it's in the future of mankind, there's got to be an angelic race in our future."

Ha ha ha.

"We'll make war for a while longer. But what are we talking about?"

What's your favourite animal?

"Well, I could live without my birds but I couldn't live without my cats. If they took my birds away the only thing that would probably really change in my life would be that I'd sleep later in the morning because they wouldn't be there to wake me as the sun came up. The only problem with animals is all the time they waste."

Yours or theirs?

"I lose three, four, five hours a day just holding those animals and caressing them."

But that's not really time lost, is it?

"I guess not. In that sense nothing is time lost."

I ask him about his holiday in Morocco, which he intends to take after this work in Sheffield. The scene in the Gulf and in the minds of the US and UK leaders was pretty horrible, and the Gulf War was just about to erupt. Morocco, being an Arab country, might not be the safest place for an American to hang out, just now.

"If bullets do not fly before my plane leaves on Friday, I will go to Morocco."

Will the scariness make your holiday more interesting?

"Well, I was looking for excitement but I don't think this is quite what I had in mind. Let's face it, when Arabs get excited about things they can get a little violent. It's a spiritual victory to kill one's enemy, and if I'm seen as an enemy... I mean, I could get away with it, I could wrap a towel round my head and stop shaving and not say anything. I could also buy a gun."

For self defence?

"No, as an accessory."

Just so everyone would leave you alone?

"Yeah. I probably wouldn't even buy bullets."

That is a scary accessory to take on holiday with you.

"Well, I was just watching some slalom racing (on TV), some guys on skis racing down the side of a mountain at 70 miles an hour. I have a funny feeling that my trip to Morocco is going to be substantially safer than anything any of those guys are doing."

Unhappily for Kramer, but most probably more happily for Kramer fans, the trip was not to be. He received a call from his wife as she cancelled the plane tickets some days later. A few moments silence were taken in the studio, while the producer digested his news.

Our talk turned to politics in music. Kramer's verdict: music used to change things. Look at Dylan, Pete Seeger, the Weavers, Woody Guthrie. Today's equivalent is Billy Bragg, "and what does he really do? I don't think it accomplishes a fuckin' thing except for a little of this (taps pocket) for Billy. I mean maybe a few more people know about the subjects because they listen to the lyrics but do you really think anyone else is *doing* anything about those subjects? Music *can* create change, it used to, but now with MTV trivialising it all..."

Kramer is disappointed because "the face of entertainment has changed". He elaborates: "You don't have to face this because you're young, you're growing up with this, you're used to this stuff. I'm like going through incredible withdrawals. I'm watching vinyl fade away, which was an artform unto itself: even though CDs sound wonderful, you can't hold one in your hand and get the same feeling from it that you used to get from a record, from flicking through records in a store..."

You're just being sentimental.

"Maybe part of what can be conveyed is an extraordinary sentimentality that can get the viewer to feel something they wouldn't normally feel. I don't feel anything from a CD..."

But aesthetically CDs are ace, they've got all those colours in them... It must be possible to feel at least as much about them...

"They're a thing of the future though. It's strange too that these things that I grew up with were these black things you couldn't see through, and now the things that the computer generation and the kids have are these shiny things that you hold up to the light and they reflect a million different colours and hold information that's somehow stored in zeros and ones... none of it really makes too much sense to me."

As I told him that I still fail to understand the technology of vinyl, the studio-produced interview tape runs out, way over time. I can remember being delighted by Kramer's health scare stories - don't leave the TV on standby, he told me: It does things to your brain. Don't drink Guinness in the US, they strain it through asbestos. Don't cook in aluminium pans... with Kramer, the world is full of immediate dangers and future bliss, with an encouraging measure of bliss for right now if you know how to do things right.

Like I said, a fascinating bloke who'll make someone an excellent grandfather.

In the world, there is Pavement. Scott (or Spiral Stairs to his friends) a person of guitar, is not present at the interview although he did leave a message on Mark's phone for us. Steve, or Stereo Master, a thing of vocals, is here. So is Mark Ibold, bass child, and Bob, the drum kit hit man. Gary Young, another drum being, is also not present.

Because it was, at-the-time-of-going-to-press, too early to get Pavement in the flesh in the UK, and as god did not give us the airfare, and because postal interviews are for losers, we did what we could: a tape of questions was swapped, thanks to Federal Express, for a tape of answers. This was the closest to physical we could get.

I actually think it is my duty to you to explain some things: i) On the cassette I sent them, each of my questions is preceded by an awful fanfare noise from Barry's keyboard. ii) The tape begins with Pavement songs sung onto our answering machine, by members of the *Ablaze!* problem solving team. iii) Since I cannot be bothered to figure out which voice belongs to whom, such knowledge is probably permanently denied to you. iv) Then, *this*, I told them, *is the first question: Is the all-pervading hiss on your records an excuse or a joke? It is because the sounds you make are greater in your head, and you can't get things to go like that in reality, so you have to sabotage it? Or is it an MBV like attempt to cause a generation of kids to throw their hi-fi systems away in disgust?*

Take it away, boys.

- I think we should do it in the most fucked up way possible. [Whether this refers to their music or to this interview I cannot tell. It seems to make sense, either way.]

- The hiss just comes from Louder Than You Think Studios in Stockton, it's only available there, and it's not intended to make anyone feel that their stereo is shoddy.

- I think we're afraid to admit that we're connoisseurs of static. Each static tune has been specifically chosen for each track.

- We're trying to reify the sound of fresh socks out of the drying machine.

How unfair do you think "a band with a big Fall problem" is as a description of Pavement?

- I don't think Pavement has a Fall problem..

- HOW I WROTE ELASTIC MAN, HOW I WROTE ELASTIC MAN...

[someone is singing, in a most amazing Southern English accent. You'd have to hear it.]

- There's a lot bigger problems in this world.

- No bigger than Spanish television has an American television problem.

- HIT IT IN THE HEAD, WITH A TWO BY FOUR...

[Hur hur hur hur hur hur... that accent's killing me.]

Why do your record sleeves look like Swell Maps ones, like things on Rough Trade in 1980?

- Karren's secret darts, Karren's secret darts/ we heard the one about the Fall, but we found out it was just the start/ it was one of Karren's secret darts, your secret darts Karren they hurt, ouch.

Tell us some Pavement mythology.

- Whenever we practice, flocks of birds congregate on the roof above us.

- The big Pavemenmt myth that bothers Scott especially is that Pavement is a New York band.

- That we share the driving on our tours equally.

Tell us about angels.

[Angels? they say.]

- That's the only question that Scott wants to answer.

- Angels are the only epistemological being that doesn't have sex organs.

E-P-I-S-T-E-M-O-L-O-G-I-C-A-L.

[How dare you patronise me so? I've written that word more times than you've played your Fall LPs.]

- We're gonna move onto question number 6, the band's having a little discussion about how they should answer, if they wanna write down the questions or do it this way because you're rattling them with

that music between the questions, it's throwing Bob off, and Bob is a storyteller. So, I'm in the kitchen right now, hiding from the band, on the pre-tense of getting another beer from the... not that that really needs to be mentioned, also my friend David's here, he's the secret like spiritual omen [?] of the band, he's never been thanked on the record but he's part of our concept. Scott's in California along with Gary, so you won't hear from Gary.

- Steve!

[The machine goes off. Then it goes back on again. There's noise, and indecipherable talking, and I know it's... a test for me, a recognition thing, I've got to try and figure out the whole thing. I fail.]



STEREO MASTER

PERFECT SOUND NORMAL DESIRES



interview by Karren A!

- Moving onto question number 6, y'got Mark, y'got Barb [Bob], Spiral... here's Mark.

- Mark.

- Yes?

- How long have you been in this band?

- What, August, September...

- Remember the evil way you got into this band?

- Oh, gard [god].

- Remember the brutal...

- That was very subversive...

- Remember Bob, you were gonna be the only drummer?

- Yeah that's right. But then I obviously wasn't gonna be enough...

- Because that one arm of yours just wouldn't do.

- Here's a future, unreleased Pavement song, it's called "Secret Knowledge Of Back Roads". [Unhappily only I have this tape, and it can't be transferred onto paper, There are occasional hiss bursts, it's recorded in a house, not a studio, on tape decks not a proper machine with some lame vocals and laughing and some passable ones just guitar and drums, makes me feel like it's only my delight holding the whole thing together.] It's the first thing we did at a little track recording studio at Hoboken NJ where we like to flesh things out.

Describe the characters in Pavement.

- You know that it's impossible to talk about yourself, so that's why you start bands.

Tell us what your best day would be if you could do anything in the world with anyone, anyhow.

- The lamest question in history.
- Bob would be in Louisville.
- Two members would go to that big rock concert with that band on 4AD, the Breeders.
- I would hold hands with Tanya Donnelly.
- I myself would like to visit my friend who's very sick, he's in the hospital right now.
- In fact let's go over there now, maybe we can get him on tape.
- Fuck, man. Excuse me, miss.
- We're in St Mary's hospital.

[They're pretending that, in between two tape recorder clicks, they have travelled to St. Mary's hospital and that they are surrounded by doctorey and nursey type things.]

- What room is this?
- 242.
- Dr Conlan, Dr Howard!
- There he is man.
- David! How're you doin'?
- You look good, man.

[Seems to describe an accident on a journey to a country club in which his larynx is destroyed, through some kinda vocoder thing.]

[I hope you can transcribe his response, they say. I can't.]

Describe the place you come from, and/or the place where you live.

- I'm from Stockton. The only way to describe it, unfortunately... you can't describe it. I'm trying to think of the



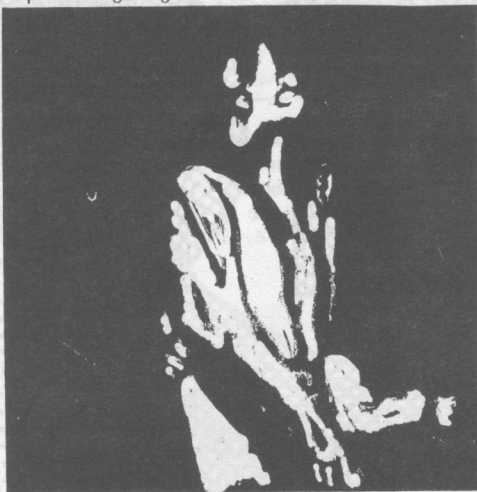
M. IBOLD

words, it's hard to. It's flat, and it's sort of like Devon-shire, except there's less grass and more dirt.

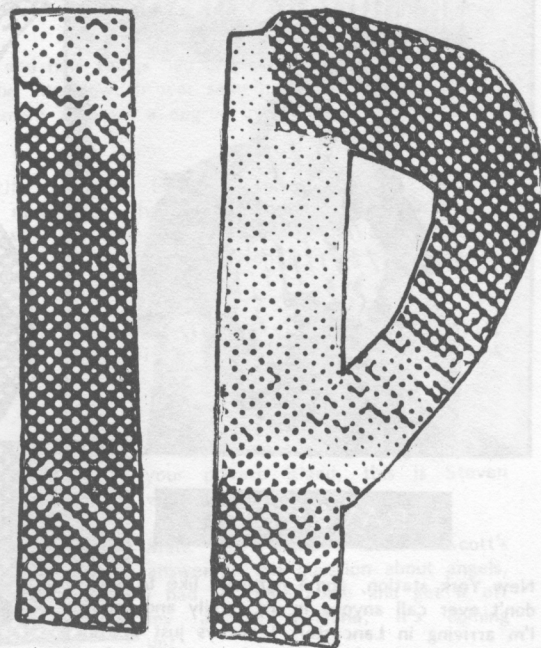
- California. Everyone knows California is going to its grave in the ocean.
- I just wanna say before David goes in you might remember a great song be Youth Brigade called "We're Gonna Sink With California When It Falls Into The Sea". Well, in fact some of us have a different view, we're not necessarily gonna sink, we're gonna make the best of it...

- The city planners and architects have designed Stockton with a double purpose. It's a practically beautiful city but it's also gonna make a beautiful reef.

- We have a few skyscrapers there and every one of them is ready to be its own island. Palm trees and lighthouses. We have some oil wells, even, ready to be set up when geological time takes its course



SPIRAL S.



- The moral is, turn your fears to your advantage.
- I think that's something that people in Stockton really feel, even when you walk down the street, and people are wearing scuba equipment in the post office...

- The strange thing is, even if you go into the simplest... I mean, you have Harrods, I know that's a

big thing in London, I know you're from Leeds or whatever, if you go out to any department store, we have an inordinate amount of swimming wear. Cos, Stockton is completely inland, I know you know that, or maybe you do know that, because Europeans generally have a better idea of world geography. We are literally 90 miles inland, nonetheless giant, and I don't think it's one of those displacement theories of Los Angeles culture dripping into us, which everyones always saying that we get everything secondhand from LA as if were like fuckin' people from Germany or something. We want two states.

- I know people say that the parking lots surrounding the stadiums are an improper use of space but Californians continue to import glass from other countries and turn it into their advantage.

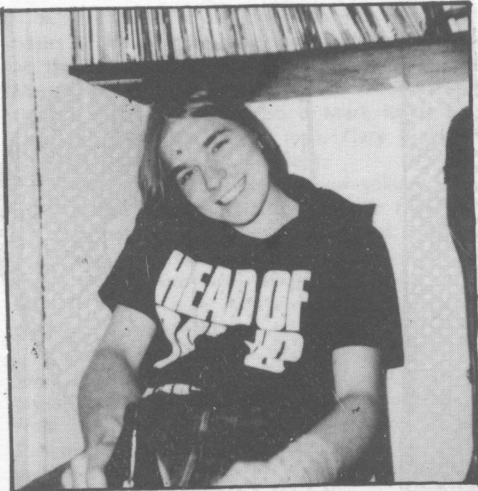
- They always have,
- And they always will.

- It's something that might even relate to the music and the larger world, like artful, internalising them so much to yourself that they're not anyone else's, but you spit it back out and no-one else'll notice that it's erm, it's like going through, when you eat it and you spit it back out in a way because of where you're from, it doesn't sound like it's from anywhere else even though it is.

- When it sticks to the wall like a Richard Tuttle's (?) paper sculpture,

- In the meantime we're gonna talk about Pennsylvania. So many people like to think of it as a between here and there type place when in fact so many people call it here, it is a lot closer to here and (whispering) there is some up on the.... where I live in Pennsylvania is about three and a half hours away from here on the Amtrak train, and if you get a good Amtrak train it'll have a smoking lounge with curtains that separate it from the bathroom area, and you can go in there and smoke, and I used to smoke a lot, so I enjoy doing that, and the part of the trip between New York and Lancaster, closer to the New Jersey part of that journey, there'll be a lot of men speaking on cellular phones, and they normally leave by the time we get to Princeton Junction, then you get to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, which is about an hour from New York, you get out and you switch trains. The Philadelphia station is a really nice station, it's a beautiful giant station. The ceilings are so high that the birds actually get in and live, but dont you think the *Ablaze!* staff would like Philadelphia?

- Oh yes.
- It's immaculate, just like their typesetting. [Sarcastic swine.]
- If the *Ablaze!* staff ever comes to New York, for instance for the New Music Seminar, we will happily take them on the Amtrak train to Philadelphia. But then after Philadelphia you go to Lancaster, which is about another hour's drive, in the western direction, and the Lancaster train station's a lot smaller than the Philadelphia or the



PAVEMENT

New York station, and I normally like to walk, I don't ever call anyone in my family and tell 'em I'm arriving in Lancaster, I always just get in a train, no matter how many bags I have, I just take my bags and I walk home, because the good thing about walking back from the train station is that there's a big difference between New York and Lancaster, when you get out of the train in Lancaster and you're walking down the street, you can hear pretty much every, no listen, you can hear pretty much every car in a quarter mile radius. Anyone that was with me, for example any one of the *Ablaze!* staff that came with me to Lancaster, would probably hear any car within a quarter of a mile radius and we would walk to my parents house. and the door would never be locked. In Pennsylvania I never had keys because I never had a car [annoyed with the others for trying to talk over him] I'm talkin' about Pennsylvania! The thing about Pennsylvania is that I never had keys before I came to New York.

- You don't realise, the next issue of *Ablaze!* is not the Pennsylvania issue.

- We're goin' over to the next question Karren, you've got nice encapsulated versions of where we're from...

How does the band operate when the distances within it are so big?

- D'you know how close you feel when your mother calls you? D'you feel far? D'you feel close...?

- The best thing about being so far apart, there's no problems whatsoever, we all talk to Scott quite a bit, and we've a neat little avoidance of tension problems, getting tired of each other...

- Well I feel pretty close to you right now Bob, you've got your armpits in my face.

- If people in other bands are reading this and you're not too happy about the way things are going in your band, I would suggest that you all move to different parts of your continent.

- I agree.

- And when you get together it will be a joyous celebration

- So far it's worked.

- It really has been.

- It doesn't matter.

- The panic stages are coming.

- But I love Steve.

- And Bob, I care for you.

How do Spiral and Stereo Master know each other and how did they meet the others?

- Scott and I went to school together since second grade when Scott was still missing teeth and wearing glasses. I had all my teeth, therefore I was the one that asked him to join the band.

- I met Steve during my second year at college, University of Virginia, and Scott and Steve met Gary.

- We met Gary by going to his studio cos it was the only one in town, you know that, and Mark we just met here in New York.

- The first time we saw the Dustdevils we freaked about Mark's appearance on stage, we referred to him for about 6 months before we knew him as the Bass Child, cos he fit so nicely into his bass guitar, and one time Dave went up to him and said man why don't you quit those losers the Dustdevils and

join us, he was referring to his band with Rob, Mark didn't really know how to react, but we gradually over the course of time became good buddies with Mark, I remember one sunny day at Belmont when we mentioned the possibility that we'd need a bassplayer for the upcoming tour...

- So basically these guys, Mark and Bob, they're kind of grafted on, like a, not like a wheelchair, but they tour with us right now, they don't play on the records yet but they probably will one day, we'll see.

How long does it take to get those songs together? Are the founder members in charge of the song writing?

[Sniggering] - The founder members are in fact in charge of the songwriting.

- She's asking about the founder members being in



BELMONT N.

PREES

charge of the songwriting. Pretty much Spiral and I and Gary still write the songs.

- He claims that we rip off the Silver Jews, trying to bring it to the Silver levels, cheap whoring of the Silver Jews, trying to get into an English fanzine through the backside.

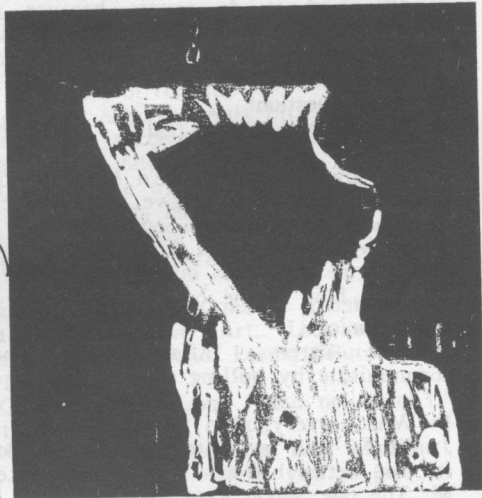
- "My First Mine" [that Pave track available only on the flexi with Ablaze! 8] is about the Silver Jews, how Steve mined the Silver Jews for riffs and ideas and songs.

The question about why Pavement previously existed without a bassist and how things had changed since they'd got Mark was answered so incomprehensibly that I have edited that part out of the interview. It was something to do with "writers, thinkers and, err, men who wear bow ties". I suspect that one of Pavement possesses a degree in philosophy, or something similar.

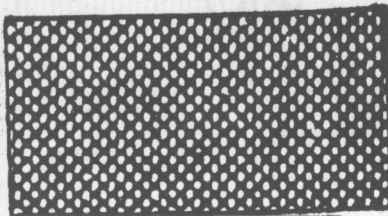
My next question concerned their then imminent signing to a UK label for European releases. Their response, "Some people say it's an untruth but in fact it's Fiction," proved to be misleading. They signed to Big Cat UK in March, amidst the mournful sobs of many label bosses. In the States they are with the terminally disorganised but cute Matador, although you will not be shocked when in the near future they are snapped up in the Nirv-driven jaws of Some Major.

What does death need time for?

[Sung, beautifully] - WHAT DOES DEATH NEED TIME FOR? WHAT DOES DEATH NEED TIME FOR? WHAT DOES DEEAATH NEED TIME FOR? NEED I REMIND YOU?



G. YOUNG



It's the end of the interview.

- Karren we wanna say goodbye to your private island, this is Steven we're saying goodnight now.

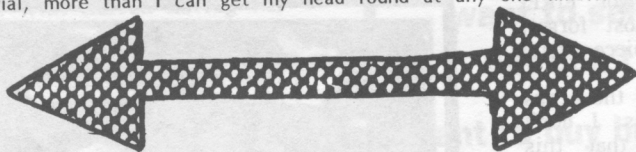
Mark at home, later: "Scott's answer to the question about angels, I had to come home and get it off my answer machine, it's coming up:"

"This is spiral, I'm only gonna answer one of these questions. "Angels And Devils" is probably one of my favourite Echo And The Bunnymen songs too. That's my answer. OK?"

"Alright, Scott, thank you. Uh, how do I turn this off?"

There is a very definite thing with time and Pavement. Some songs just flit by, they require so much of your concentration to be aware of exactly what they are, and other songs, sometimes, dare to dwell... the sort that wipe the others out, standing up there as if they're the only ones.

Despite all the nihilistic hissing noise, the willful obscurity, melodies manage to break through. Pavement have the capacity to produce the most infernal fucking pop music history has ever had. Pavement are the culmination of something, of some of the glory that can be squeezed from being an animal, they do for your ears what good sex does for your cunt and your brain. Pavement songs are full of angst, of crazy, healthy, adolescent yearning. Just pave me out, I don't mind. There's so much material, more than I can get my head round at any one time... here's what you missed:

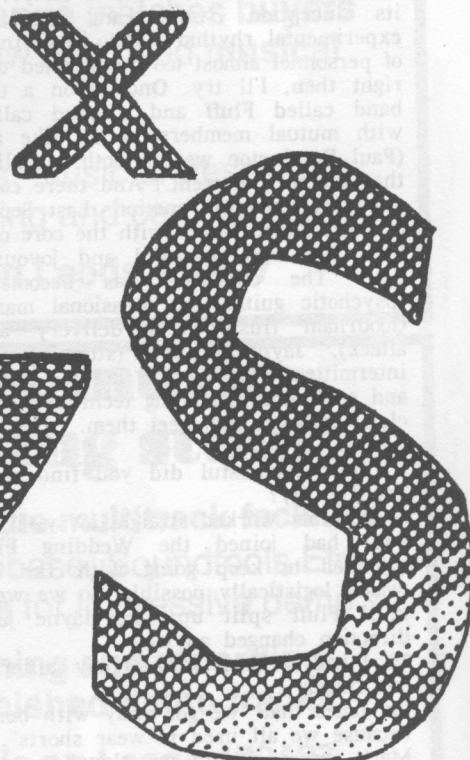


"Slay Tracks 1933-1969" 7" EP, recorded Jan. 17th & 18th 1989: YOU'RE Killing Me/ BoX ELDER/ MAYBE mayBE/ She BELIEves (edit)/ PriceYEAH. (Treble Kicker).
"Demolition Plot J7" 7" EP - Oct. 16th & 17th 1989: Forklift/ Spizzle Trunk/ Recorder Grot/ Internal K-Dart/ Perfect Depth/ Recorder Grot (Rally). (Drag City).
"Perfect Sound Forever" 10" EP, 29th & 30th Dec. 1989: Heckler Spray/ From Now On/ Angel Carver Blues/ Mellow Jazz Docent / Drive-By-Fader/ Debris Slide/ Home/ Krell Vid-User. (Drag City).
"Exact Wording Of Threat" 7" EP: Summer Babe/ Mercy Snack/ Baptiss Blacktick. (Drag City).
"My First Mine" on Ablaze! #8 flexi. (Stuffed Cat UK).
"Slanted And Enchanted" LP (Big Cat UK).

(Demolition Plot, Perfect Sound Forever, and Exact Wording Of Threat are available on import, through Greyhound distribution in this country. Slay Tracks is deleted. The flexi is available from our address, £1.50 & 50p postage - including a free magazine.)

PAVE-MENT.

The best pop songs.



tse tse fly



Fluff parallel band Tse Tse Fly are ace and ready to rock. Paddy susses what they're all about.

So like there's me, just listening and trying to get things straight in my head on how to write up conversations, and then there's Karren who's like going to ask lots of searching, difficult and pretty weird questions, and we're both sitting in this artists' studio (or atelier if you're posh) in Leeds. We've climbed a few flights of stairs and passed several red buckets of sand which have got 'FIRE' written on them. Surreal. Oh yeah, almost forgot, we're here because of that gorgeous four-piece group called Tse Tse Fly.

Entomology tells us that this an insect of the genus *Glossina* which transmits sleeping sickness. I don't believe that. Topbandology informs us that this startling creature has had a complex evolution since its inception two years ago as a nameless experimental rhythm outfit, involving myriad changes of personnel almost too complicated to go into... oh all right then, I'll try. Once upon a time there was a band called Fluff and a band called Tse Tse Fly with mutual members, a bit like a Venn Diagram. (Paul Dorrington was in both initially but is now in that Wedding Present.) And there came to pass much shedding and rejuvenation. Last September, the core of Fluff joined forces with the core of Tse Tse Fly, to form the most powerful and joyous combination to date. The chrysalis has become Simon Cleave (psychotic guitar and occasional manic vocal), Mark Goodrham (lush vocal delivery and dual guitar attack), Jayne Locky (stunning bass lines and intermittent singing) and Ian McCrimmon (he of solid and confident drumming technique). Now that's crystal clear, let's go and meet them.

K: How successful did you find merging Fluff and Tse Tse Fly?

S: Oh, that worked straight away, it was really good. Paul had joined the Wedding Present and had intended to keep going with Tse Tse Fly, but it wasn't logistically possible. So we were a three piece until Fluff split up, and Jayne joined. Then our direction changed anyway.

M: I had to learn how to play guitar with more than one finger!

Ian notes that "we got away with being a three-piece because we all used to wear shorts".

Mark agrees: Before we played a note people would expect us to jump up and down.

K: How do you decide who sings what?

S: I tend to think of Mark as the main singer because he's got the strongest voice, but he'd possibly disagree with that.

M: Yes, I must disagree with that!

Jayne says that it's usually "whoever wants to sing it, or just a matter of practicality; if you're playing something complex, it makes it hard to sing at the same time".

This all appears to be really democratic.

S: But we're trying to do 'Hanging On The Telephone' and Mark really doesn't want to, but the rest of us really like it - so we'll force him to do it!

K: What's the point of doing that cover?

J: It's a top song and we like it!

I: It's good to do covers because an audience's familiarity with a song might help to make our songs more understandable. 'Enola Gay' was good for that.

K: Have you had much record company interest?

M: Next question!

J: We've had some really, really nice rejection letters...

S: We always thought we'd have to do it ourselves anyway, although you have to remember this band's only been around since September.

K: So what makes this band work for you? Is it that you get on with each other really well?

S: With four in the back of that van, you don't get much choice!

Jayne agrees: "After several hours people communicate by pulling stupid faces at each other."

K: What's everybody's favourite books?

J: What's *your* favourite book, Mark? [Bookmark - get it? You better had cos this is their joke.]

M: The one Simon gave to me, with a caricature of myself on it.

S: Mine is the one I got from Tring on a school holiday.

J: Mine's a cut-out hedgehog I got when I was 15.

I: Mine's a piece of dried grass!



Now it's time for Karren to ask what does death need time for. I don't get this, but everyone else seems to know the score.

J: Oh no, not that old chestnut again.

M: What? On a Sunday?

S: Death needs time for positive dental hygiene.

Ian embellishes: "Chewing tinfoil used to be my favourite pastime".

Jayne says she used to like testing batteries on her tongue. Oh yeah, I forgot to mention that Jayne's cousin used to be in Led Zeppelin [Well, almost: he was in Band Of Joy, with Plant, Bonham and Page, but, Pete Best style, didn't stick with them to become Zep and famous. Ed], and Robert Plant used to go to her uncle's house for tea. Ner ner ner.

K: On the theme of insects and pop music, do you feel that Tse Tse Fly is part of a tradition starting with The Crickets and The Beatles, going through to Adam And The Ants and Silverfish?

I: Definitely the Adam And The Ants bit.

S: We're getting more successful now as a band, because we're all getting fatter (except Ian).

K: How does that correlate with success?

S: Have you seen the Pixies lately?

[We are working on rooting out the fattism in Ablaze!, but we're not quite there yet... Ed]

Jayne and Simon are both top-quality artists, and run their own business, Other Art. (Look out for their smart van zooming round Leeds). But what about Ian and Mark?

I: I work for Opera North - props - and no, I don't get to borrow them.

S: You do! I saw you dressed up like Madame Butterfly just the other day. And you've got a sprog.

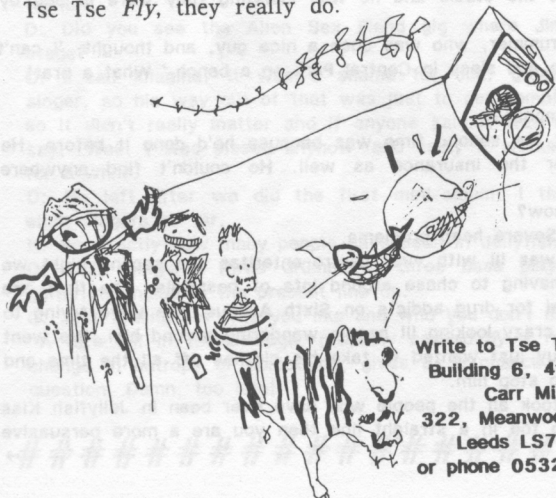
It turns out that Liam is 15 months old and "partial to a bit of Tad".

Mark says "I serve drinks and watch TV and listen to music and go dancing and snack". One of his ambitions is to get thrown out of a pub for chucking up.

Oh no, just when you thought you'd gotten through a whole Tse Tse Fly article with Karren having her say, here she comes:

When Tse Tse Fly play live, with an ever new set of songs incorporating occasional classics carried over from Fluff, my short term memory fails and I head for the venue, cat in bag, thinking I'm gunna see a different band, the band of Jayne and Simon before 2nd September 1991. Even so, eyelids still shake, and a whirlwind shakes the pub as four people constantly rewrite everything. Jane smiles, skillfully playing ace basslines and singing her ace stuff and looking just cool. Simon is inside his head where there is much light and darkness, bent over his guitar, Mark sees out occasionally, the end of his nose peeping over the pop shield. The songs flow into each other and link together, leaving us in mid air and earthbound at the same time. A very important part of me is suddenly made of blu tak, one end of it flies to the ceiling. I'm tied.

Tse Tse Fly, they really do.



Write to Tse Tse Fly at
Building 6, 4th Floor,
Carr Mills,
322, Meanwood Road,
Leeds LS7 2HY,
or phone 0532 626802

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Soren A. Kierkegaard, Jean-Paul Sartre and Martin Heidegger; just three of literally lots of existential philosophers who have nothing to do with Jellyfish Kiss: a wiggly-waggly, super-duper, acey-pacey, fabby-wabby jibber-jabber based in Leeds, just like your favourite magazine. Probably you've never heard them, perhaps you've never even heard of them; however, don't despair, like faith and charity you're not without hope; just take a deep breath, sit back, put your posters up and revel in the words of wisdom proffered by drummer Chill and guitarist Dave to Karren Ablaze! and Gavin Burnblack in one of Leeds finest drinking houses. First subject for dissection: fan mail.

D: We had some weird fan mail. Pyromaniacs in Wigan. Total nutters basically.

G: Is that the market you aim for?

D: Not necessarily; if they like it fair enough.

C: We're not actively encouraging pyromaniacs.

D: We don't approve of burning things down, but we always write back to them; we just hope they don't come to visit!

You may have seen Jellyfish Kiss supporting Ween in February. I was going to ask them how the tour went until I remembered it was still January and it hadn't started yet. Chill, ever alert, if at times sounding uncannily like Ted Chippington, volunteered the following information for those of you unfortunates who didn't see them.

C: You can tell them all about the merchandise, got loads of merchandise. Have you seen the T-Shirts? Lots of those available. All you need to do is buy the album and find out the address on the back and say I'll have this amount with a cheque enclosed.

K: How much are they?

D: I don't know.

Talk of Ween naturally turned to talk of Kramer; sometime Ween bass player, alltime spectacles wearer and boss of Shimmy Disc records. Kramer has assisted on all three Jellyfish Kiss albums, contacting the group after they released a mini-LP *Gasoline Junkie* on their own Long Pig label. Perhaps now is not the time to tell you that the phrase 'Long Pig', actually a description of the human body favoured by cannibals, reminds Karren of turds so back to Chill who was not actually a member of the group way back in the halcyon days of 1989.

C: I'm still shocked that's what encouraged Kramer to take you on board, I find it quite amazing.

D: We find it quite embarrassing actually.

Selling as the presence of Kramer in this magazine may have encouraged a few of you to part with your pennies (and if you don't have issue eight featuring Karren Ablaze!'s definitive interview with Ann Magnuson, the world's most wonderful (wo/hu)man, send off for it the second you finish this article) Karren asked if Dave or Chill had any Kramer stories.

D: You know (lighting a cigarette: it's not on the tape but it's a fair guess) he's got a 24 track studio in New Jersey; it was stolen when he was abroad. This guy booked into the studio while he was in Denmark, when he came back he'd dismantled his studio and taken it all.

C: He's quite a funny bloke. He tells a lot of good jokes which I won't repeat on the tape recorder. He spent loads of time finding out who had the best jokes after we first cracked that one which was particularly dodgy and he thought that was hilarious and off he went with an armful.

K: Sick?

C: Quite sick really. Yes they are quite sick, yes. (Giggles) I was just trying to think of one and I remembered the punchline.

D: When we did *Animal Rites* (album number two), Mark (ex-rhythm guitarist) and Andy (vocalist) were staying at the studio and he was insisting they were in bed by ten in the evening.

C: Except for Mark, your old drummer, who was such a nice guy, and thought, 'I can't impose myself on anyone, I'll go and sleep in Central Park on a bench.' What a prat!

D: He spent one night in a skip.

K: Because he didn't want to impose?

D: Well the first time was but the second time was because he'd done it before. He even tried to get mugged for the insurance as well. He couldn't find anywhere dangerous enough.

K: Why's he not the drummer now?

D: He had too many problems. Severe head problems.

D: Nick, our old bass player, was ill with viral gastro-enteritis the second night we were there and we ended up having to chase around lots of hospitals. The first one we were sent to was a hospital for drug addicts on Sixth Avenue. We were trying to talk to this guy with all these crazy-looking ill people wandering around him. We went to another hospital and some guy just wanted to take his clothes off all the time and the security guard was trying to stop him.

It has been said that if you took all the people who have ever been in Jellyfish Kiss and got them all to lie head to toe in a straight line then you are a more persuasive person than I am.

Photo: AT



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D: Well people just get it into their head to leave. They want to do something different. Our last drummer wanted to play guitar eventually.

C: Well he did, he sold his drums for a guitar. Now he's buying percussion. I don't understand what he's up to really, perhaps he's going to beat a guitar.

C: Mark (previous rhythm guitarist, as opposed to Mark, previous drummer) is very attached to a large Alsatian dog called Ezra; you had to get used to Mark and Ezra. People found that a bit of an obstacle.

D: At one point we had to take Ezra with us when he couldn't get anyone to look after her. Three of us in the back of the van with all the equipment and Ezra trotting around standing on people's faces and then running around the venue on the evening, barking at everybody, woofing at the T-shirt woman.

C: I saw him today, he got fanatical about his paraffin lamp he'd just bought and he got all his paraffin lamps out and I said, 'It looks like there's something wrong with the wick' so he said, 'Quick, pack everything up, we're off to buy some new wicks' and that was it, we went running around Harehills and Roundhay looking for a wick shop.

K: I remember seeing Jellyfish Kiss years ago and them being really terrible.

D: Did you see the Allen Sex Fiend gig where Jim fell off the stage?

C: I can imagine. It was a shame for Jim; great bloke, awful singer, so his way out of that was just to get completely arseholed so it didn't really matter and if anyone said it was awful he could say, 'Well, I was pissed anyhow' and sadly it worked fine for him for a while.

D: He left after we did the first mini-album. I think we've had eight singers so far.

K: So exactly how many people have been in Jellyfish Kiss?

D: Eight singers, three drummers, three bass players and three guitarists including the present line-up.

C: Just finding out who you like and who you don't like.

A rare lull in the barrage, probably caused by a freak directional change in entropy or something, gives us a chance to ask another question. Damn, too late!

C: That singer you had after Jim wasn't happy at all about something.

D: He wasn't happy about the way we rehearsed. He always complained that we never had songs in the form we were going to do them, we kept changing them. It didn't really suit him.

C: I think Andy's ideal because of the very nature of the whole thing is it requires somebody who doesn't need a strict format and Andy is very keen on that; he doesn't want to know exactly how it goes. He invariably sings it differently most times we play it.

Dazed momentarily by a reference to a member of the current line-up, order is restored almost immediately.

C: Nick (original bassist) lives in another world in a way. Nick's got this brother, he's insured for a couple of million because he works in some sort of financial situation; his brother has a huge sum of money.

D: Once he flew his whole family to Lapland for Christmas day on Concorde. I don't dare think how much that cost.

C: He's Polish isn't he?

D: Yeah, his dad's Polish.

C: And, err... I've forgotten the relevance there.

The latest Jellyfish Kiss album is entitled 'Strange Weather' but when our copy arrived it was called 'Stormy Weather'. I was reminded of this as I recently heard that the Manic Street Preachers album was supposed to have been entitled 'The Generation Game'.

C: That's a fine example of Kramer's poor management skills; to get something pressed and not even check if they've got it right before they run thousands of copies off.

K: Does it say that you're from Leeds on the sleeve?

C: It's got Huddlesfield on the sleeve, so you know that we're from near Leeds.

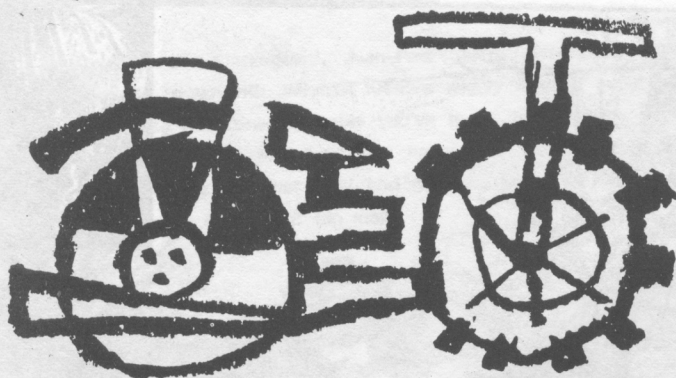
K: Huddlesfield?

C: That's another printing error.

The numerous references to drinking and circle smoking which appeared throughout this interview (not included because of lack of space and fear of offending those moral guardians who read this magazine) lead to a final question. Are Jellyfish Kiss mad and substance driven?

C: That's not strictly true. Mad and substance encouraged.

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Every now and then a big high hits. There have been several during the time it's taken to compile this luvverly 9th thing; the Mabuses' LP, the Nirvana single, Shudder To Think's tour, but the one that affected me most suddenly, deepest, flooding the euphoria right up to my toes, was the show the Pastels performed with Jad Fair in Leeds in November. In the Duchess Of York I was unexpectedly captivated by the sounds emanating from the figure of Jad, wide-eyed, teasing his beautiful painted guitar, drawing us out. Forcing, in fact, the miserable cynics of West Yorkshire to go with him on his journey into the sky. He won us over completely, and then brought onstage a smooth, zoomy, rocky bunch of Pastels to back him. What a live LP that night would have made. "We've got friends that can do things" is how they announce hordes of autoharp and violin players onto the stage. Professionally unprofessional, these eternal early teenagers, they did a song called "Lucky Star" which had such sunshot rain, so much high sugargasm bursting joy, that the very boundaries of my soul were rended - the Pastels Aggi, Stephen and Katrina, and at this event Charlie and David too) reached right through and *touched* me. Stephen had violet eyes, they shone unreasonably as he sang, but afterwards I discovered they were something dead usual like brown. So, as you can imagine, I needed to ask someone some serious questions.

O Pastels Of Utter Wonder. Tell me about pop music.

"Pop music isn't the most important thing in the world," pronounces ace bassist Aggi. "People are. But pop music's a very important part of our lives. Why else would we spend so much time trying to connect up with what might be the ultimate sound or a perfect melody? We like playing and we like listening." I sat with Aggi and Stephen, two longstanding members of this glowing youngpeople band from Scotland. They are a band that's never been frightened into bowing to convention, a band to whom waywardness is a way of life. We were sheltering from Saturday afternoon in a nasty commercial café in Leeds, right next to the record shop. I wanted to know why art seems so much more important than all that other stuff, that "real life" thing we hear so much about. So? Stephen -

"When the government passes a piece of legislation that affects everybody, that's a lot more important. Less than one in a thousand people have even *heard* of Sonic Youth. But someone somewhere will love that band or any other favourite band," he continues, "And when they hear their favourite band play it might affect them like nothing else in their life. And when you really love music and you hear it, sometimes it's just completely overwhelming - an insane, wild, intense assault on your senses. To compare that feeling with politics is impossible, but I'd say that politics is a lot drier. Or maybe the passion's just gone out of it."

Pastels maintain the positive aspects of being a child, the wonder, the honesty, the purity; their behaviour is a subtle form of rejection of the mainstream, adult ways of being. They explained what "Fire Bell Ringing" is about: how on the train, mother draws a happy domestic scene for her child. He takes the pencil and scrawls big all over it: "Mummy mummy, the kitchen's on fire!" When she draws in the fireman to save the scene, he scribbles over him also - "Mummy, the fireman's on fire too!"

Their dress, too, sets them apart. They say 'fuck you' to the label merchants with clothes fled from by forced fashion consumption merchants. "Our clothes could be construed as ugly or drab," says Stephen, "But in fact they're kind of ironic and a bit flash."

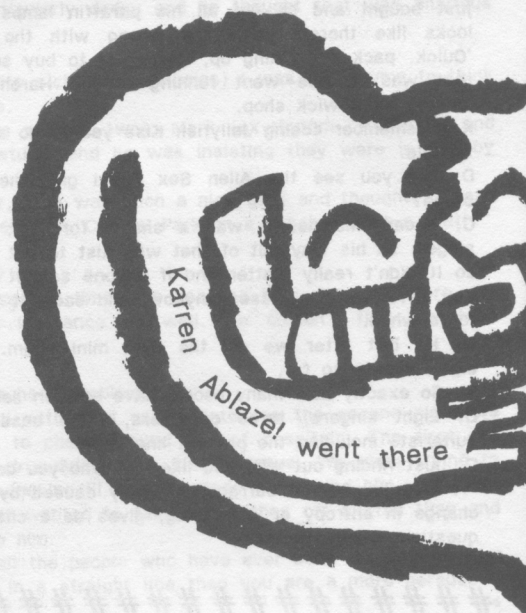
I'm totally impressed with the Pastels. I used to like them, four or five years ago, but was subsequently discouraged by a bad performance which seemed to consolidate the "twee" (i.e. crap) label they'd been assumed to live under.

Upon rediscovering them, I realised how *Up For A Bit...* is an album of genius proportions. The first track, "Ride", is so much

ROCK'N'ROLL



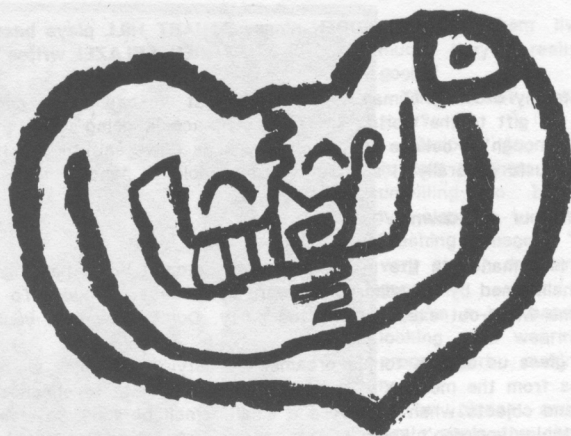
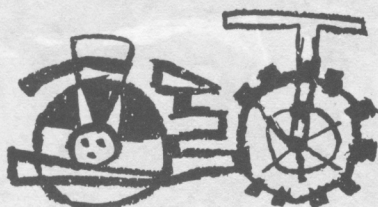
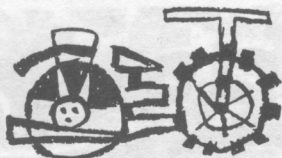
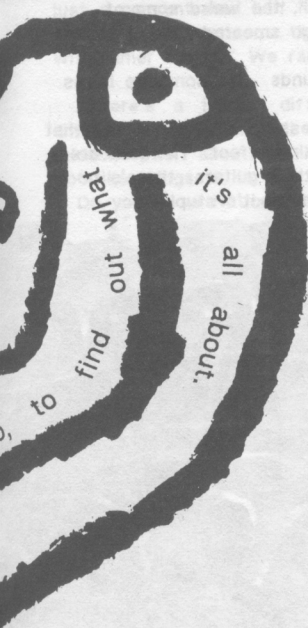
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more useful than a busload of Oxfordshire bands. Stephen's angst-ridden story (*"I was born in the middle of nowhere and since thatday I've been suffocating"*) is conveyed with such deadpan determination, over those wondrous strings – it just scrunches me up.

One Pastelism that stayed with me through my prodigal wanderings was "Zoom", the last track on *Sittin' Pretty*, the one with the heaven-aimed autoharp – on seeing that Katrina possessed such a thing, I was adamant that they should play the song; but due to some severe line up alterations they were unable to do so.

In the cafe, I asked them how they had lost Martin, Bernice and Brian.

"We asked Martin and Bernice to leave," Stephen explains sadly. "I thought it was the right thing to do, but it was also the hardest thing I've done in the history of the group. We were going to leave, just take the name and let them have the band. It wasn't good because they weren't as enthusiastic as they had been. Our enthusiasm for the Pastels is boundless, we're trying to keep alive that feeling you have the first time you plug in an electric guitar and go 'wow!'"

So c'mon Aggi and Stephen, how does it feel to be the grandparents of so much twee bullshit?

They both sigh. "Ah," replies Stephen, tiredly, "we're not old enough to be *anyone's* grandparents. Most of those people that we're supposed to have influenced are the same age as us but they started later."

He's pretending to forget the fact that in our tiny universe of music, generations may pass in months, and the term incestuousness refers to *metaphorical* blood. He's refusing to play my game; probably he's been asked such questions too many times before for it to be in any way interesting.

But what would anyone do without their influences? The way people like the Pastels made, for example, the Sarah bands possible, "paranoid virgins" though they may be, was like how punk rock made us all possible; how Jonathan Richman made them, and Jad, possible. And there's *always* gonna be the unintended outcomes, the side effects; like those boys at Pastels gigs who dress like desperate entrants in a Paddington Bear lookalike competition.

I was worried about the fact that my tape recorder had failed completely and that I might not recall all the things they told me. That's when they told me about their Heavy Lawyers, who sue negligent journalists.

"That's what every band needs," they explained. "First you get the amps, then you get the Heavy Lawyers. Tho' we haven't actually met our Heavy Lawyers yet."

But, what happens, I asked these Pastels, when civilization comes to an end and all the records melt and all the CDs melt?

"Oh, I don't know..."

We each gaze into our own personal distance.

"It'll be like Noah's Ark," says Stephen. "All the good artists will be rescued from the molten vinyl and go on a big boat..."

Aggi: "A really good recording studio."

And, I guess, all the music journalists will flounder in the mire.

How long has it been since I last felt like this, rushing, racing, feeling the dimensions around me, my relationship to the road, to vehicles, the buildings' to the sky (that big blue tall thing)?

No other band is quite like the Pastels. I want to get all the Pastels records and play them to my (kickin' an' screamin') friends. I want to go out and see them tonight, and drink the dew of excitement. I want to rock out tonight like there's nothing else.

CRAIG WEDREN sings, STUART HILL plays bass, CHRIS MATTHEWS plays guitar, MIKE RUSSELL plays drums.
KARREN ABLAZE! writes her heart out, about SHUDDER TO THINK.

Despite my ordinary human evils I know that I'm basically a good person. I wish other people and other beings well, and the words I write are a part of my gift to the world. The next sentence is going to be a significant one for things with ears. *Hear Shudder To Think*. Not that I'm arrogant enough to believe that their appeal is universal; though if you're interested in the sort of bands we feature, or if you've a head for exciting music generally, I suspect you'd be able to handle them.

"I'll burn your day down..."

Craig is a man with fire in his soul, you catch it when he sings. Craig's voice is a strong, pure and beautiful, ranging from high up to way down, maintained by an admirable inward steadiness. Shudder To Think are not a hardcore band, so, please don't be scared of them. Neither are they some wimp-out excuse for a tea party. Don't let any of your preconceptions get in the way this time. Hear them.

Craig gives us access to his dreams. By defying the rules we're all usually bound by, those unspoken ones we all obey in order to protect ourselves from the menace of insanity, he cuts a path to childhood. You know that lovely glimmer of fascination that used to surround everyday events and objects when you were a small, small person? So close to the magical feelings of dreams, where you're in a world quite new and unpredictable, you don't know how it works. And anything might happen.

"Regina" I shouted. That's when it came clear. The fire truck was black. It kept circling my house. Down the street. Through my backyard fence. (Snake in the bushes). Then through the fence again. Her head is engulfed in blue (color). In the white (her collar). On fire. On fire. My wife is on fire. The piano burnt down. The train caroused around my house. "Hide that sexy horse" she howled..."

WIPE ME OUT. I love their records. Their records are perfect. When they play live I'm disappointed by the sound, I'm disappointed by the people there who have to dance with their elbows (why hurt each other? what's your problem?) and people blowing bad smoke into the small amount of air we share. Live they give insight, they exude love, but the records are pure pleasure.

A personal guide:

There's the *Medusa Seven* single, on the British label Hoss 45. I bought it last time they played Leeds, when I didn't even watch them. I took it home and marvelled at the singer's weird voice, and left it dormant with the others like it was just some freak of nature, a band with only one interesting feature. The A side track, "Vacation Brain" turned out to rock entirely, so we then assumed they were a band with one song. Although still presumed guilty, their *Ten Spot* and *Funeral At The Movies* LPs were introduced to the living room turntable, where they eventually became an essential part of each good day.

Their debut LP came out on Samhain in the US. I don't think it's available here, and it's got some really good bits, and one dire bit where they cover 'Imagine'. *Curses, Spells, Voodoo, Mooses* appears to be its title, and listening to it makes me feel like I'm soaring through the sky really fast looking down at glorious landscapes. It's very rocky, and Craig's voice isn't doing much of what it's capable of, and he screams a lot, so it's not very sophisticated at all. OK, it sounds like *Slade*, but it's ace to hear once you've got a taste for STT.

Ten Spot pretty much defies description. A rock LP, for sure, but one with enchanting subtlety. Guitars trickle and weave in and out with heavy metal solos from high realms, and gnash and shudder and crystallize out there. The lyrics are worthy of literary awards, their delivery is exquisite. Really. "About Three Dreams" has lyrics which could have been criminalized for their corniness, that anyone could use them, without any apparent sense of order, and pull it off so awesomely, defeats my powers of explanation. Let's just say STT fuck the conventions of rock - backwards, and the conventions of rock seem a lot better for it. In "Yes" Craig sings "No, no, no, no, um, yes, yes, yes, yes..." - that's all. "Tony Told Me" Tony and Christie. "It was misty like a mystery... Brake and bony like windchimes hung in war time." From tenderness to frustration. Way, way... And the rest of the time Craig's voice is chasing the guitars. Drenching, daring, delicious.

Funeral At The fuckin' Movies, the glossiest yet, shows the vocals and guitars, untangled slightly, and adorning even stronger songs. No-one can argue with 'Chocolate', on which Craig irresistibly demands: "Am I really second best, to HIM?" It's the instant hit on here, but there's so much more. "Red House" is beautiful, their version of 'Crosstown Traffic' rocks, but the special thing has gotta be the welding together of the so clear, vocally chiming and determined 'I Blew Away' with the surreal dreamscene of 'Ride That Sexy Horse'. Pour it into your hangover, let it hang over your living room, loud.

Record players are benevolent machines sometimes, pushing out sounds that massage yer pleasure centres after a hard day's whatever. I hate to sound like a salesperson, but these two long play wreckids are utter ideal accessories for your own special music machine. And now:

"Swoon". The first note of "Love Catastrophe" is an early morning rude tongue in my ear. *Get Your Goat* has arrived. A C60 tape from Victoria, recorded only on one side, is packed with the most incredible sounds. I feel stretched when I listen to this, like I can't believe, lying down and my toes are leaping out of my feet; my back arches at the sound of Craig's voice. Floating. His voice is the central thing, with the summer steamrollering (quite a bit of "You Made Me Realise", NB. there are 1,000,000 ways of sounding like MBV and, just now, everyone does) ploughing around, digging out the stars, getting burnt hands, then eating them. Then exploding. I mean EXPLODING. Oh where does it come from? Something prepared me for this, a tune forced its way into my muffled three year old brain and I've been craving for its completion ever since. Which is not to say that my current satisfaction is eternal, I'll be begging for more soon enough, but: there aren't words big enough for the rocky road of abstract cries by the bright hills of "White Page", the upward spiraling guitars and yearning yells in "He-Harem", the weird song of sadness and strangeness that is "Rain Covered Cat" (this song made me cry). I hope you are not discouraged by my ego smeared here, by the way I've fused the record with my personality: take the record and leave me here and you've got it.

"Hey sleeping pumpkin hey, hey the fire's blo-own out..." the weird ending song this time is "Funny", in which it sounds like someone burns down the house, with themselves and their friend in it, because they've thought about it. It's painful to hear.

Outrageous band. They've swum against the thin, pathetic (but somehow, for other mortals, compelling) tide of 90'sness to a patch of sea that is unspilt and otherwise uninhabited - now they float there, at peace with themselves, whirling vocal c(h)ords to shocking effect. The fish are confused; they gaze, wide eyed. Mike has just enough control over gravity to jab at those drums. Stu and Chris PLAY their guitars, there's no other word; they don't tease them - that would be cruel. And they don't worship them either, cos, although understandable, it's stupid.



"What about art?" I asked Craig, who is a performance artist in the other half of his life. Although my spirit tells me that the creation of something beautiful is the most valuable thing it's possible for a human being to do, a nagging voice bothers my conscious mind, asking *shouldn't we be doing something more useful?*

"I personally think that to make something beautiful or to make something ugly, just something that contacts yourself first and then other people, is worth as much as any political or social, anything statement orientated, y'know. For me." Craig often interrupts what he's saying like this, at pains to point out that his views are only specific to himself, that his knowledge is limited.

"So the way I involve myself and contribute is through my self, my own experience, not so much through *Issues*. Those are the things that move me most..."

The TV buzzing in a different corner of the pub was showing *Top Of The Pops*, and at that moment the interview skidded to a sudden halt as Craig and Stu, Lisa the merchandiser, Gavin and I and most of the bar staff leapt from our seats at the sound of the dumb DJ uttering the phrase "Straight in at number nine... Nirvana!" The gales of laughter, the shrieks of ecstasy as a British cultural institution is mocked by the indifferent new indie metal Jesuses, subverted by over-the-head bass playing and a stage invasion, hint that few things affect us as strongly as full flowing, living art.

Photo: FG



TEEN SPIRIT

As the hysteria dies down, I ask Craig what would he do if Shudder To Think were *TOTP*.

"I dunno! I'd probably just laugh and laugh and laugh. I've never seen it before but that was really something."

We try to make some cultural comparisons. Gavin notes that their MTV is sub-musical bullshit available all the time, whereas *TOTP* is just a concentrated half hour of it once a week, a form of "ritualistic torture". Lisa tells us that it's similar to *American Bandstand*, "but with lamer bands." We raise our eyebrows at such a notion.

"There's a lot of different kinds of bands on Dischord now," Shudder To Think tell us, doing their bit to dispel a popular misconception about the label's image as a hardcore institution. "It's not like things fit in and things don't fit in."

Do you know Nation Of Ulysses?

"I like them live very much, they're really really good."

They're not serious are they?

"Serious? Ah, you'd have to talk to them," he says, unwilling to blow their non-sleeping, non-tooth-brushing image. "They're very stylish dressers. They generally wear suits. They're a hot band, good-looking guys wearing some proper garb, makin' some noise."

The pizzas arrive and Craig peels the cheese off his. (I could draw an analogy between Craig's vocal talent and the finest cheese: try something you really like, such as mature cheddar with fruit cake, and you'll see what I mean.) "I like cheese but I try not to eat it on tour as it's not so good for my voice." He takes good care of his voice, drinking hot water and lemon juice all night from a flask, even on stage, and eating bits of lemon every now and again.

Lisa points out that today is thanksgiving, and leads them in a garbled and surreal prayer: "God is great, god is good, let us thank him for our fud, Amen."

When the band decided to do this tour Craig told his family, ("They're really cool") and his mom and his grandparents wanted to come along too.

"So we came here together, we spent a couple of days in Bath and then we played in Newport last night."

What do they think of STT?

"I don't think they really have an opinion on it, it's not their type of music. My grandma likes it actually, but she likes everything I do cos she's my grandma. They're totally approving. Their basis for judging is whether people turn up and get into it. They ask me, 'Did the kids like it?'"

WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE

Stu, the unfeasibly sexy bass player, explained how he was originally in a band called Stuge with Chris and Mike and when their singer left to go to school in Scotland, Chris recruited high school pal Craig after seeing him singing in a play.

"We didn't think we were going to actually be a band," Craig remembers. "I'd just been kicked out of a band so I figured I'd be



in this hardcore band for a while but I didn't really wanna do hardcore, I was never much of a screamer, then after a couple of practices we thought 'this is really fun, we'll carry on for a while,' and," (his voice ages 60 years), "it's been five years now...!"

"We're massive now," reveals Stu, to an ignorant world.

Isn't Shudder To Think a total pop band?

"Not any more. You should hear *Get Your Goat*. It's slower, harder, more atonal at times, noisier at times, mellower at times, odd tempo, unusual rhythms. It's just more its own thing than pop. *Funeral At The Movies* was pop. We wrote that record and it was songs that we didn't spend a lot of time writing, and they were just catchy songs that we liked. This one's a little different."

Well those ingredients sound like good ones, I tell them, my eyes glazed with sound-greed.

"It makes sense that this new record is a little more individual, we spent a lot of time writing the songs."

"It kind of pushes out the band's talent of songwriting, cos *Ten Spot* was a pretty solid rock-type album, then *Funeral* pushed it out to poppiness and better songwriting, and this new album is gonna push it out way much; further..." explains Stu.

"It's definitely gonna take people more time to get used to it."

Craig is deliberating. "I kind of feel like this is the first record where we totally... this is gonna sound ridiculous... we've always had elements of other people's sounds or other kinds of music but I think this one is the least like that, it's totally *our* music."

"It's definitely the one we've put the most time into," says Stu.

Do you think that all art, not just music, is about finding your own voice? Gavin, sitting under the folds of his great philosopher hat, asks.

"I think that's kind of what life is about, hopefully I'll become more and more myself the older I get."

But for some people, the struggle to find their voice is more interesting than once they've found it, and for others it's a positive evolution process towards something that makes sense.

"And I think a lot of people just resign themselves to whatever voice is most available around them, what is the least tumultuous voice."

Or the one that gets the most approval.

"Yeah."

Your records are so beautiful, you sound like you love the music so much; like Stu onstage, the way he faces the band and SMILES when he rocks out.

"I'll tell you the reason why - we've been together for five years!" announces Craig, beginning a stream of disclaimers to their brilliance.

Stu: "We're not technical geniuses, by a fucking long shot."

There's a lot of passion in your music.

"I really love playing," Craig tells us. "I don't understand why people play music other than for music's sake. Like people who play music for fame, it's like a vehicle, it could be anything. It just so happens that music and pop stardom in our time and culture is the route to like the *funnest* kind of fame or something. It's totally beyond me how the form can be ignored."

Gavin asks Craig whether he needs to hear lots of new music.

"Yes, it's something I almost need to discipline myself to do. I see

so many people who as they get older they stop looking for anything new, I mean most adults, they kind of hit a ceiling at a certain year in their life and they don't take anything in anymore and I don't ever wanna be like that. It's not to say that I'll understand or be a part of everything I hear, because I think the older we get the harder it is to, like, connect, like with subcultures and stuff, but I always wanna be available to it. I try to read a lot of record reviews and find interesting record stores and talk to the people who work there." Among his favourites he lists Frank Sinatra, Slint, Lyle Lovett and Patsy Cline.

He tells us about one of his records: "I have this disc called *Voices From Tuba*, a teeny place I think, between USSR and China, it's all of these voices and things with Jews' harps... It's basically this place where singing is part of the culture, so they have all these rites in the form of songs - just these routine things they do during the day like washing the cow or something. There's this one thing they do, like chanting, it sounds a little bit like Tibetan monks - apparently they stand at the top of some steps at a certain angle to the wind so the wind like blows across their mouths when they're singing and it makes this completely new instrument, it sounds as if they have some sort of reed instrument lodged in the throat. It's really incredible."

Do you think you might pick up on that and play with a wind machine at the side of the stage?

"No," he smiles, "but I was thinking how amazing it would be to go to Tuba and find somebody to study with and just sing all the time..."

It would be nice to be *permitted* to sing, to have the space to do that.

"When I'm home I feel so self-conscious. As much as I love to sing, as much as I want to sing for the rest of my life, I kind of don't have that much confidence about it, I always judge myself by other people's voices and end up shutting myself up."

The thing about outstanding singers is that they have their own style, they don't copy anyone.

"That's the thing about outstanding people, they're just them. Having the courage to be themselves."

So what does the phrase *Get Your Goat* refer to?

"It was like, I wanna call it *Get Your Goat*. Craig does his best dirt-brain voice. "I kept saying it for months, and eventually they were like, 'OK'."

There is a song called 'Goat.' Stu points out, perhaps hoping to present the group as some kind of reasoned entity.

"Yeah," agrees Craig, smiling a short-lived illusion: "but we just named a song 'Goat' so it would have something to do with the album title!"

"Don't print that!"

WHAT DOES EVERYTHING MEAN, BASICALLY?

Do you have thing about goats, or goat jokes?

"It's not a thing about anything. Not much of our stuff is things about things," Stu explains, ultra-eloquently.

"But actually," bursts Craig, "the new songs have tons of animal references. I go through phases with lyrics where shit comes up like all the time..."

Which animals?

"Let's see, horse, fish... others!"

"Goats!" offers Stu.

What were previous lyrical phases about then?

"Religious, mythical stuff, death..."

Stu: "Girls."

"Girls! I guess it doesn't change much. Oh, seasons, the weather... *Ten Spot* was very dreamy..."

Stu summarises their lyrical career to date, Stu-style:

"Then *Funeral* stuff was more stuff about nothing... and the new album is even more stuff about nothing."

The LP titles fuck me up, I tell them. I recognise the sleeves but the titles don't really fit in. I don't understand.

"That's because we are, don't, we haven't, connected them..." explains Craig. *Funeral At The Movies*, we named after a song on the LP. I personally like things that are totally unrelated, I like just throwing shit in, not to confuse people, it leaves more room for my imagination."

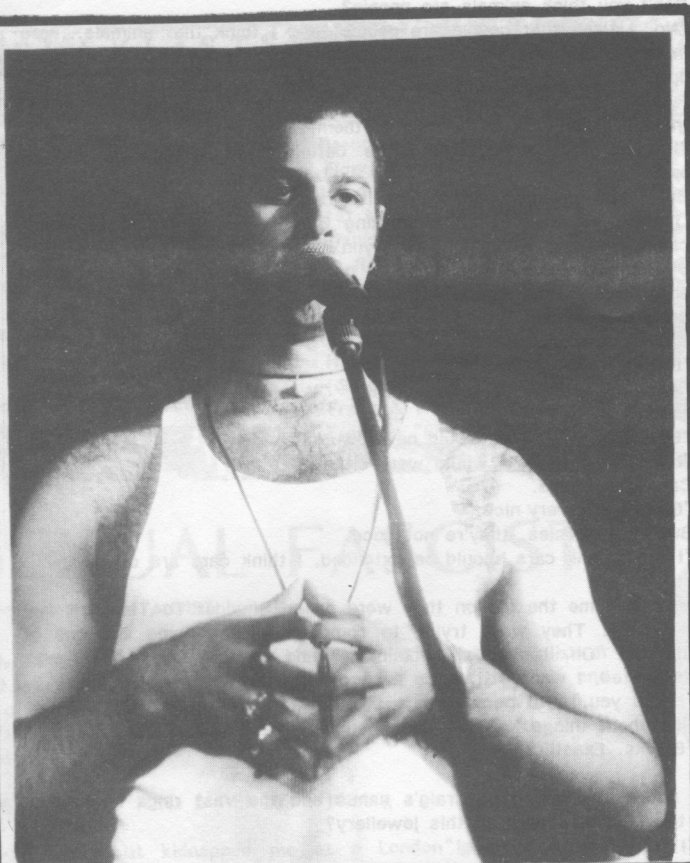
Stu seems to ignite: "People get really eaten up that *Funeral At The Movies* is such a pop album and that it has the word 'funeral' in the title."

The phrase still doesn't make any sense



PHOTO BY CHARLES STECK

Photo: PG



though.

"Oh, that was an actual dream I had," muses Craig, "And the lyrics are about that, I had a dream that I was at the Waverley Cinema on 6th Avenue and Leaguer St. in Manhattan and I was sitting in the rightmost section, kind of in the middle, and I looked back and there was this kid, he looked like Sal Mineo in *Rebel Without A Cause*, and he was wearing a suit and he was flanked by these two very old men on either side of him and they were walking him down the aisle, and I somehow knew that it was his funeral, that he was dead, oh, and he had this cut across his neck and I knew that he must have got his neck slit, and then they like sat him down in the centre section, and I knew that this was, in my dream reality, the ritual of a funeral."

Are films important to you?

"I love films so much, I could sit in the movies all my life. My favourite film is called *Nashville*, it's very long but it's just mindblowing. One of my favourite movies is called *Unheard Music*, (?) a documentary about the band X. If you don't like X, it might be a bit pretentious cos a lot of it, what looks like footage, is actually acted. That's kinda cheesy, and if you know that..."

"I didn't know that!" Stu looks disappointed.

You've spoilt it for him.

"Yeah, dick!"

I asked Craig about films as sources of lyrics, eliciting a mere "I dunno", whereas a mention of dreams produces a river of stuff:

"Over the years, I do a lot of writing, and I've just got used to that kind of stream of consciousness writing. That's mostly what my lyrics are like, even if they're not dreams I had, they have a dream logic; I much prefer it to linear logic."

You prefer it to real life?

"Well, I probably should say yes, I think I do, although I don't like that." He begins on a story and cuts himself short, sounding a bit sad, saying "I don't really want to go into all that... I'm definitely hooked up."

It's nice to allow yourself to experience child-like happiness, when you don't have to be responsible for things.

"That's the thing, no responsibility - to logic, or to be

understood, there are so many gorgeous incredible things that come out, reflexiveley - you don't have to force things out, I don't really know what I'm saying but there's so much latent in myself and in everybody that particularly comes out in dreams, and it doesn't take any effort. It's the richest material, you don't have to manipulate it and squeeze it into shape. And that's what I think reality's like, I have to squeeze myself into reality."

Dream things usually need censoring before anyone else can hear them.

"Well, even between your head and speaking and writing it, it changes. My teacher was telling me how dreams don't happen frame by frame, they can just be this big like squoosh of stuff in your head, and just because you can't speak like that, cos you can't go 'zgmdrtlm', you end up taking the important parts and putting it into story form, even though it doesn't make sense..."

It's not temporal.

"Yeah. Another thing I like is the fact that in dreams, I think I've said this in interviews a lot, I could be sitting like right here like right now, and there could be something SO evil about the chair that you're sitting on for no reason at all and it could be like the most awful thing, and then suddenly I'll just be in love, I'll be sitting here and maybe I'll be saying the same thing but I'm TOTALLY in love. Y'know and there's just so much under the surface and it just bubbles..."

It's a pity that you can't be physically real in the dream.

"I try that. There are people who say you can train yourself to control yourself in dreams. And I've tried that, but it always ends up that I'm in a dream and I'm like (in tones of desperate effort) 'I-WANT-TO-PICK-UP-MY-ARM!!' Someone told me that if you focus on an object, you can kind of go into it, and somehow once you get to a certain focus control, you can start controlling your actions in the dream."

The beer arrives.

"Beer is another thing that influences me. Beer reality. Are they warm?"

"They're English-cold," Mike, bringer of beer, tells him.

That's not as cold as American-cold?

"No."

Is that what you think of this country, that it's substandard?

"Certain things are better about this country..."

"There are better British accents here!!"

Craig: "It stems from anti-Americanism, there's a lot of things to dislike about America."

Stu: "Especially when you're from our section of society."

"So when you travel in foreign countries you pick out things like, our stuff's colder, when you go into a store and order ice cold coke, we get ice in our beverages, you just kind of notice..."

"It's like Levis, Hot Rods, and Converse tennis shoes... those are the main things," quips Craig.

What's good about other countries then?

"In Belgium, there are the waffles, and Holland for the bicycles. Definitely Germany has the beer. Hofmeister," he says, examining the cans they've been brought. "They package it so you think you're eating a banana, so you think it's good for you."

"How full is it down there?"

"Packed, it's packed," Mike lies.

"When do the doors open?"

"Now"

In my reality it would be brimming, I tell them. There'd be queues down the street. Craig says that his reality would be like that too.

"They've all watched TOTP, they're inspired," says Gavin comfortably.

"But they'll say, 'You can't top this,' and they'll stay in..."

You should go on stage and play "Smells Like Teen Spirit". With your guitar above your head, I urge.

Craig is uncertain. "I have to say, I like Nirvana, but it's just kind of college rock, it not that earth-shattering..."

"But think back 4 or 5 years..." the drummer begins.

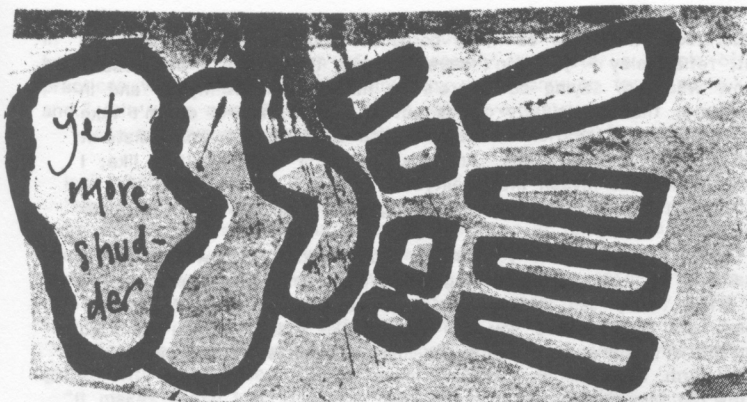
"Oh, if I were like 12?"

To everyone's laughter, he justifies himself. "I always feel like I'm 16, y'see. Cos I don't get to drive that much."

"But say you're 12, just think what hearing that record would be like."

Yeah, for all those scruffy kids with greasy hair, they've finally found their gods. When Nirvana don't shave for their publicity shots, that makes them feel really at home.





"If Nirvana are reading, I like it. I like it a lot..." Craig mutters diplomatically.

Mike: "For a lot of people it's gonna be the first record they hear, so it's gonna be important to them, but within the scene, I don't think it's important, it's just very good. But like Dinosaur Jr, they just wrote one song..."

Craig: "If Dinosaur Jr are reading this, we like the album, we're all for it..."

"I definitely think our albums have gotten better. I hope so, cos if they haven't we might as well just get on the next flight home."

They have. It's OK. Get the first flight back here, please.

"You've explained *Funeral* and you've kind of explained *Get Your Goat*, but you haven't explained *Ten Spot* as a title."

"Oh that's because, when we were on tour, we get 10 dollars PD, per day..."

"Our old roadie, he's very abrupt, he'd go, 'Hey gimme my tenspot!'"

"And we have all these good titles too, but we've always been a very democratic band, and consequently, cos we have varying tastes, we usually end up settling for the totally middle of the road ones."

"We each get lists of our favourite titles and vote on them."

"And *Ten Spot* won!!?! I found the lists the other day and it was totally embarrassing. I thought, 'Wow, I'm glad it's called *Ten Spot*.'"

"The stripping child show."

"That was a lyric, man. It was from a dream."

"There was *Plateskipping*. Oh, and *Rapunzel, As In Ponytail*."

"Oh god."

What do you think about animals?

"I think they're cute! I like animals a lot."

Don't you think animals are people?

"No, I think that people are people, and I think that animals... are animals. I think that we're animals, but I don't think that animals are people."

I think that we should extend our definition of people to animals, then we wouldn't be as horrible to them, I tell him.

"I think we should extend the definition of animals to include people."

But that's already done. I think it's best to do it my way round.

"I think we should call everything Buicks. No, it would be good, because everyone would just be stylin'."

Stu objects that everyone would get mixed up if we all addressed each other as 'Hey! Buick!'

Craig elaborates. "You would still be Stu, but you would be Stu of the Buick species."

"But..."

"And my dog", continues Craig, "Would be JR of the Buick species."

"But then, see, that would never work."

"No, I don't think it would work either!"

Cars aren't nice.

"Buicks are very nice."

But as a species, they're not good.

"I don't think cars should be extended. I think cars are cars."

Mike told me the reason they were called Shudder To Think. It was really lame. They were trying to come up with a name and one of them said "Oh, I shudder to think..." and so they chose it. I was disappointed, I wanted it to be packed with meaning.

"I told you," Stu perseveres, "Like most of our stuff, it's just like things about things."

"Buicks. Exactly."

I had been looking at Craig's hands and the vast rings he carries on them. What's with all this jewellery?

"I really love huge rings!"

"Huge!"

"Yuge, with a capital Y."

My heart is full. This has been the most wonderful interview. I'm going to turn *Abaze!* into the Shudder fanzine. Only one more question needs to be asked: are you a non-smoking band?

"I'm a non-smoking man," admits Craig.

"I'm the only one that smokes," croaks Chris, the dreaded guitarist, "And I'm sick."

When it was announced just now that Chris is being replaced by Nathan Larson (trumpet player with Girls Against Boys) for this summer's European tour, we at first assumed that this was why. No we didn't, we read the press release and it explained that he was going to be too busy studying. But he'll be back.

So kids, you know what to do and you know where to go. This has been my testament: I Shuddered To Think, and my senses blazed.



NEXT TIME YOU'RE lonely, or desperate, or horny, or hungry, or hurting,
or wanting - You know this hole you've got here that like starts here & goes like all the way up to here and

feels like it could never be filled, that endless void? Here's my advice: **EMBRACE THE VOID**, fill

up the void: not with sewage, not with garbage, not with food,

not with drugs, not with useless sex from useless men **BUT**

WITH YOURSELF - with your own **POWER**, with your own heat, your

own energy, with your own light, with your own **LOVE**. And once you

learn to do that you wont need anything useless anymore. Go on, grow

up, get **FULL** - & **NOT** of shit.

(from *Conspiracy Of Women* CD by Lydia Lunch)

PLAYLISTS

VIN
evenly - "Sixth Fingerless".
ntray - "Traller".
st Party - "Tree Shada".
ngwater - "Over The Credit
e".
e Saints - "Throwing Back The
ple".
inking Fellers Union Local 282
ack one.
llins Band - "Low Self Opinion".
adonna - "Justify My Love".
ust - "Diet Tray".
ereolab - "High Expectation".

KARREN

Get Your Goat. Best LP ever.
"Secret Knowledge of Back Roads".
Breeders "Safari" especially.
Flow by Pell Mell
Hood "My Autumn Days"
1st Muses LP. I don't care.
Shudder live. Forever.
In Ribbons esp. Meriel's "Hey
Percy" song.
Thinking Fellers Union Local 282
Lovelyville LP
High Back Chairs: half the songs
(divided inside, not outside).
Frank & Walters "Happy Busman"
Erection "Floppy Bunny Song"

LUCY

Shudder To Think, everything ever
Furniture - *The Wrong People* LP.
LFO - "We Are Back".
American Music Club - "The
Confidential Agent".
"Erection" - "Skyglow".
The Go-Betweens - *1978-1990*
70 Gwen Party - "Heller Party",
"Power Elite".
Bongwater - "I Want To Talk
About It Now".
Pale Saints - "Ordeal", "Hair
Shoes".
Chainsaw Kittens - "Bloodstorm".
Toasted Heretic - "Galway And
Los Angeles".

JUSTINE & KEITH

Drive Like Jehu - *Drive Like Jehu*.
Unrest - "Imperial".
Thinking Fellers Union Local 282
- *Where's Officer Tuba?*
Slovenly *Drive It Home Abbernathy*.
Red Kross - *Born Innocent*.
Anything by Fugazi.
Big Dipper - "Approach Of A
Human Being".
The Slint band.
Sexual Milkshake - "Singalong In
Hebrew".
The U.R.G.E (Overkill that is).
The Monks - "Black Monk Time".
P.S. Keith says the Dustdevils are
way cool too. Oh yeah and buy all
Daniel Clowes comics, books and
record sleeves else you are
stupid.

SEXUAL FASCISTS

Karren interviews a MOIST boy.

The interview took place on the road with Nick, vocalist of Moist, recorded above the roar of the engine as we drove in and out of clouds of fog in the wet darkness on the M1 on a Sunday, while vast hallucinated fences sidled across the road ahead of us.

MOIST: NICK v NED b PERCY d JON g

Jon from Moist kidnapped me at a London gig recently, holding my magazines hostage in his drunken hands. Well, he staggered, and I followed, trusting him to reveal to me the secrets of South London geography. He didn't; in the end I got a taxi, driven by someone who knew even less about it than I did. I guess it all depends whether you see things as problems or as gifts... Moist have geographical obstacles that could seriously upset any lesser band: Nick spends most of his time in Leeds being a philosopher and the rest live in the South, in places called Caterham, Waddington and Balham. ("Not very rocking areas, it has to be said.") The solution - they rehearse without Nick, and he ventures to see them occasionally, listens to the tapes and thinks 'Oh that's how the songs go.' "Occasionally I have to make up the lyrics at the soundcheck, cos that'll be the first time I've ever heard them."

Ejaculate, erection, eradicate, earnest, ear, error, er, ether (as in Franklin), ergot, ego, elephant... just a few words that begin with 'e'.

Support from the kids means a lot to these Moist boys: "We've been very lucky, our gigs have been getting better and better, we're building up people slowly who seem to like what we're doing."

Utensil, udder, urine, urethra (as in Franklin), utmost. Umbilical. Ugly beginnings for an ugly band: "We started 18 months ago with a different line up, we were called Not From Manchester, we just pissed around. It was when the guitarist Jon and drummer Percy left The Pushkins (now signed to Wildcat Records) that Moist really started." Moist have now been going for just over a year.

So, who chose the name? "Ned the bassist. It's his sense of humour. In terms of subject matter, it's a cross between anal and angst(?). That's the sort of thing he thinks is funny."

Like some kinda holy prophet, John Peel once said he thought the word 'moist' was possibly the most erotic word in the English language.

"I think that's brilliant. I think he's a really good man. If he likes 'moist' as a word what greater recommendation can there be? I think Moist are highly erotic, with the rhythm stuff throbbing away, although the word is faintly disgusting, kind of slimy and sticky, leaving a trace, not very nice, all told."

Zeitgeist. Zither. Zebrafication (the ancient study of knowing how to make stray horses into zebras). Ziggurat. Zombie glurg. It makes me think of potting plants, I told him.

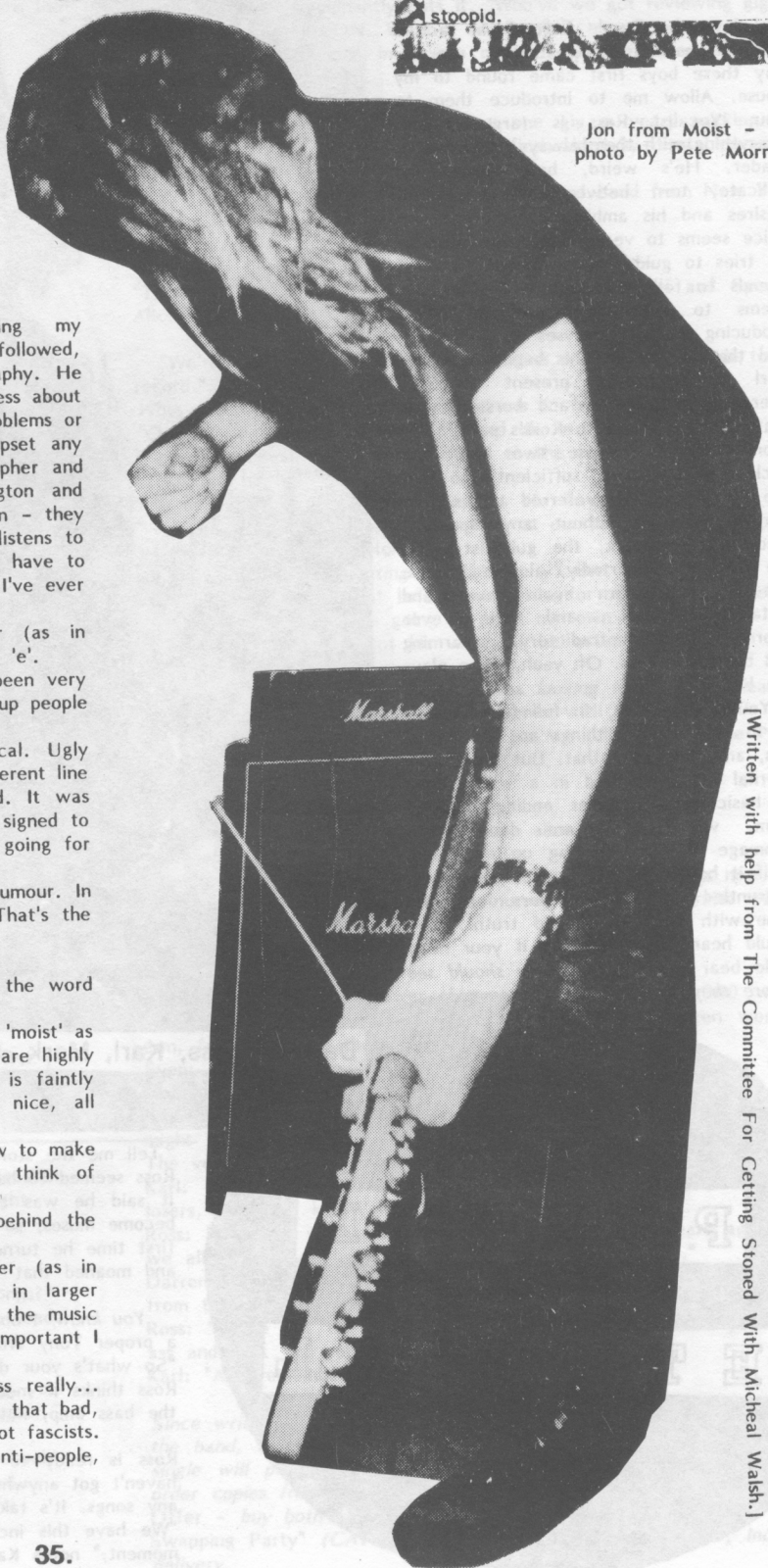
"Ah, yeah, like moist peat," he mused. "But there's no credo behind the band that means we've got to be moist..."

Russian. Rabbit. Roadie. Rectum. Reify. Rev. Reverb. Reefer (as in Franklin). Reactionary views like misogyny are common enough in larger society, but in our cosy, censored, sensitive and studenty niche of the music industry it's always shocking to encounter such attitudes. So, it's important I know: why doesn't Ned like women?

Damn! Uh, umm, I, err, I think, errr... I think it's a shyness really... Better to ask him. Gotta keep band cameraderie at heart. It's not that bad, it's not that offensive... Oh, it's so hard to justify really. We're not fascists. We're cuddly boys, we've got nothing to do with that. Moist are anti-people, not anti-women..."

Jesus. That's what they all say. Cuddly boys or lizards?

Jon from Moist -
photo by Pete Morris



[Written with help from The Committee For Getting Stoned With Micheal Walsh.]

WARNING: Non-Leeds people are unlikely to make very much sense of the following article.

Welcome to the enticing and terrible world of Purple Eternal. They're gathered in our front room. What are we going to say to them? In the style of parent reading a progress report, I had but one question for them: why haven't they got anywhere since their last *Ablaze!* interview, way back in 1988? Although, of course, I get sidetracked, while everyone talks at once, shouting out reminders of subjects forbidden during the interview, swapping in-jokes with *Ablaze!* staff, bickering over which cup of tea belongs to whom.

I love the Purple Eternal. In fact, I lost the need for pop star pin ups the day these boys first came round to my house. Allow me to introduce them to you. Vocalist Ross is (arguably, as everything with them always is) the band leader. He's weird, both gross and delicate, torn between his immediate desires and his ambition. Sometimes his voice seems to verge on exasperation as he tries to guide this wayward group of friends to follow his latest scheme. He seems to spend most of his time producing succinct analyses of the history and the direction of his band. Drummer Karl is his ever present sidekick, energetic and pretty, and bursting with sharp, witty retorts to Ross's painstaking pronouncements. These two form the nucleus of the band, sufficiently so that the pair are often referred to as 'The Purple Eternal' without any apparent inconsistency. Mark, the guitarist, joins the fray wholeheartedly, along with the lost-and-found born again raver and guitarist Darren, and the ever unpredictable, contradictory, charming and beautiful Sven. Oh yeah, Sven plays the bass.

You'll hear them, in full flow, urging us to believe that things are "basically" this, and "basically" that. But the Purple Eternal are implicated in a whole heap of basicallies, a never ending nest of them, which they are doomed to rummage through, holding up each one as if it holds the answers to everything, disgruntled to see the others doing the same with different shaped truths. You should hear them rehearse, if your head could bear the screams. *You should see where they live...*

PURPLE ETERNAL



Darren, Ross, Karl, Mark, Sven: Young men seek gay music journalists...

PURPLE

ETERNAL

Tell me the story about the prodigal Eternal, Darren, coming back. Ross seemed to have prepared his reply in advance: "In the first *Ablaze!* interview, it said he was the token musician, and in the meantime the rest of us have become musos, so we asked Darren back so we'd have a token non-musician. The first time he turned up to a new rehearsal he only had four strings on his guitar and moaned that we asked him to put two more on."

You know, I observe, everyone in this room except for me has got long hair. It's a proper Tony Woolgar scene. "So what's your definition of the verb 'to woolgar'?" Gavin wants to know. Ross thinks it means 'to hang around, to lig'. Sven thinks it means 'to stare into the bass amp, not look at you and talk the other way.'

Ross is ready to begin answering our central question. "I think the reason we haven't got anywhere is that we had a lot of potential but we didn't actually have any songs. It's taken us about 4 years to write some."

"We have this incredible knack of jumping off the bandwagon just at the wrong moment," notes Karl.

AL

Ross: "We used to sound like Loop/Spacemen 3 before the Telescopes, then we thought it was really naff to do that and stopped, at which point those bands became much more trendy than they had been before, then we started sounding like Hawkwind."

Karl: "Purple Eternal are like Rip Van Winkle, we went to sleep in Hyde Park one day when we were really stoned and woke up four years later..."

They decide to ask themselves about their influences (professionals, these lads).

Ross: "There's only two bands that everybody in the Purple Eternal likes and that's the Butthole Surfers and Public Enemy. Recently we've got more influenced by Can and less influenced by Pussy Galore. We only said we were influenced by Pussy Galore in the first place because..."

Karl: "We thought it was trendy and we could jump on the bandwagon!"

Ross: "No, because we thought it was really good that they were too loud and couldn't play as well."

Mark: "Purple Eternal's major influence is Micheal Walsh."

Karl: "We idolise him."

We can exclusively reveal that this is among other things...

You've got a record out? we ask them, refering to the shiny single on our very own Stuffed Cat UK label.

"Oh yeah!" they exclaim. "We've got a record."

Tell us about your record.

Ross: "Well we've got two tracks on it, one of them is called 'Arthur Lee's Duvet', and the other is called 'We Worship The Worm'. 'Arthur Lee's Duvet' is about kicking my room in."

Really?

"Yes. The landlord's still after us. It's literally about lying on my duvet, listening to Love."

Which house?

"17 Ebberston Terrace."

You had holes in your wall at 6 Ebberston Terrace too.

"But I didn't do that, Karl did that. And Sven."

Sven: "I think we were just completely claustrophobic."

It's a bit sad really, it's not the same as trashing hotels is it?

Ross: "Kicking hotels in is rock'n'roll wank, though."

"Whereas kicking our house in was great," quips Sven.

So where's the single gonna take you?

"Um, oh.. b.. err..." (They're not sure.)

Sven: "I think our ambition for the past four years has been to break into Bradford, and we still haven't done it yet..."

"What about the single?" asks Ross.

Karl - "What about it?"

"Well, I think we should answer some questions about the single."

"Well go on then."

Are you on the B side as well? asks Gavin, obligingly.

"No."

No? It's a good job we checked then!

Ross: "The single is a split single with Spectral Alice."

Darren: "This is completely obvious anyway, cos if you look at it..."

Ross (shouting with frustration by this stage): "But you can't look at the single if you're reading the interview!"

The relatively smooth running of this rock industry chit-chat is shattered by a suggestion that the Purple Eternal have gone straight edge. "We're good clean-living kids nowadays," they claim.

"But... Why don't we talk about the songs?" asks Ross, persevering in his attempt to lead his wayward flock from the subject of substances.

Darren: "Well, the first one's about kicking your room in...and the second one is about drugs..."

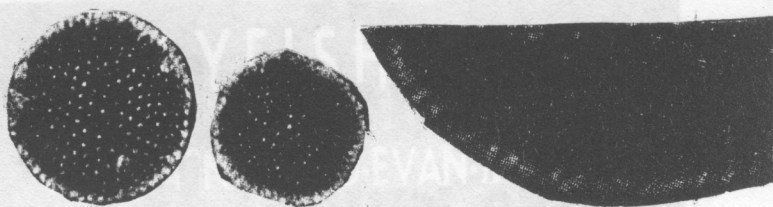
About how few drugs you take?

"About how they screw you up and everyone should get into looking after their bodies," explains Karl.

So how many of the Purple Eternal take drugs at the moment?

Mark: "Six."

Karl: "There are only five of us, Mark."



Your record's produced by Richard Formby (of Spacemen 3 fame)?

"Yeah, it's the best production we've ever had."

Karl: "We've been spending a lot of time rehearsing and going back to the proverbial drawing board, trying to get somewhere, failing, going back and rehearsing again..."

Sven: "And ending up sounding like Nirvana."

Ross: "OK, we're selling out."

Sven: "How can we sell out when we've never had any principles?"

They're bemoaning the lack of official music press agents in The North. As Darren poignantly puts it, "Who've we got reviewing gigs in Leeds? DAVE SIMPSON. What a wanker."

What bands are there in Leeds worth reviewing anyway? I ask, diabolical-accomplice-like.

"Zero Zero."

Ah yes, Zero Zero. They do about one gig a year, packing the dancefloor by the force of their Godflesh-aided-by-turntables-and-all-sorts-a-gadgetry noise.

Mark has a hot tip too: "There's a really good band from New York, called Get Starsky."

New York?

"New York, Leeds Six."

"They have nothing at all to do with Purple Eternal and Spectral Alice," we are assured. "Honest."

"We're really hoping that some teenagers will commit suicide to our record."

Why dont you get some of your friends to help out?

"Or that someone will have a fit and die in front of the stage."

"Doesn't Micheal Walsh always stand at the front?"

"Yeah, ha ha ha!"

"He needs a bit of abuse to keep his life in order."

"We named one of our songs after him at our last gig - this is called 'Micheal Walsh, Phone Home!'"

He's supposed to be writing for Ablaze! y'know.

Ross "I keep hearing that he's gonna write for Ablaze!, and then he says 'No no I'm not, I'm going to start my own magazine!'"

"He's worried he'll corrupt his words if he actually puts them down on paper."

That was the walshism definition I was looking for! Gav is pleased.

Sven: "Funny how walshism almost rhymes with bullshit..."

Ross: "Are we talking about Leeds or are we talking about the Purple Eternal?"

Take it away, Ross

"Well, obviously some of the songs are about drugs..."

Hahahahaha.

"They're the older ones, we're writing mature sensible songs now. 'We Worship The Worm' is a sort of nursery rhyme, in praise of the worm..."

Hahahahahahaha.

Pretty good. Now answer this one in less than 10,000 words: Why haven't you got anywhere even though you've been working, erm, fairly hard all these years?

Sven: "Because we haven't been working very hard, cos we're basically lethargic."

Ross protests: "I don't think we should talk about this cos people might not want to have anything to do with us."

The very foundations of my house creak with laughter.

Karl: "People won't want to buy our records if they think we're losers, I mean I know we are, but..."

Ross: "Basically we were really exciting about four years ago, then we all got off on being hippies and taking too many..."

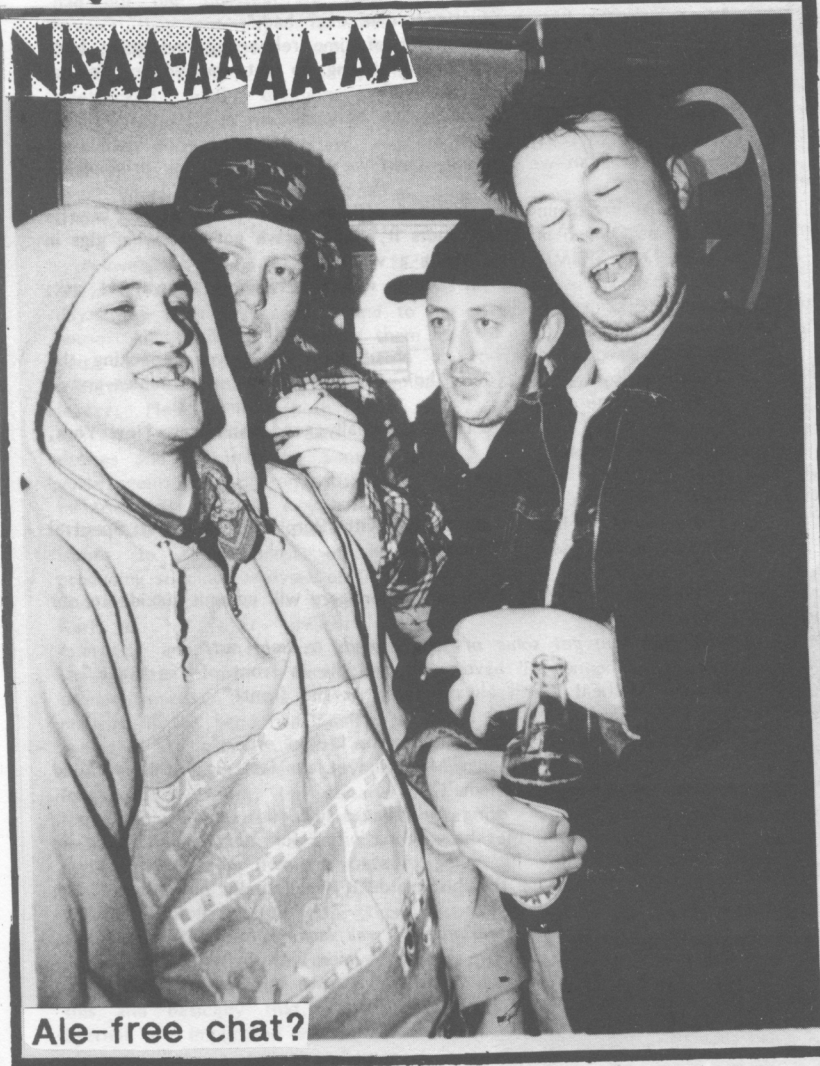
Darren: "They kicked me out of the band and it all went downhill from there."

Ross: "We've got the original line up back and we're ready to kick ass and rock and roll again."

Karl: "And remember, kids - drugs are for losers."

Since writing this article we've received the news that Mark has left the band, and that they're going to continue as a four piece. The single will probably be distributed by APT, but you can buy mail order copies from the Ablaze! address, for £2.50 inc. P&P. Special Offer - buy both Stuffed Cat UK releases: Orange Sunshine's "Wife Swapping Party" (CAT 1) & this one (CAT 2) for £4.50, including delivery.

Lord, I don't fancy yours much! It's...



LEATHERFACE

Words by Lucy Nation, grisly pics by Tony Woolgar

Since the release of their irresistible *Mush* LP, Sunderland's Leatherface have been picking up plaudits from all quarters of the Bubble Of Babble. Indeed, *Melody Maker* went so far as to dress singer/songwriter/guitarist Frankie N.W. Stubbs up in a Santa Claus suit for their Christmas issue. *Smash Hits* must surely be around the corner; and no wonder, because the Leatherface pop steamroller at its best demonstrates a truly exhilarating and affecting combination of classic melodies, heartfelt lyrics and sheer horsepower presumed extinct by most since the demise of Hüsker Dü.

That comparison will piss them off because, along with hardcore forefathers Motörhead, it's the one they always get, and neither is particularly accurate (Frankie: "I've got *Candy Apple Grey* and *No Sleep 'Til Hammersmith* and that's it."). Leatherface songs are more intricate and tuneful than anything in the Motörhead canon, yet they don't have the spacey, transparent sound of the Hüskers' best work; where the shimmering, zinging blanket of fuzzy guitar always seemed to be miraculously suspended some distance above the fluid bass and (completely inconsequential) drums. On *Mush* the two guitars and bass mesh into a taut and purposeful machine equally reminiscent of melodic punk bands such as the Sex Pistols, Stiff Little Fingers, even Buzzcocks circa *Another Music In A Different Kitchen*. As for *Mega City 4* etc, we're talking different leagues here. If you wanted third-rate you wouldn't be reading *Ablaze!*, after all, you'd be off buying Carter and Kingmaker records and immersing yourself in the can't-spell-won't-spell world of NME.

The heart and brain of Leatherface is Frankie, a man once described as "an excellent acerbic lyricist with the unmistakable air of the autodidact", yet one who just can't decide what his Favourite Song Ever might be; a question which presents no dilemma for guitarist Dickie Hammond (SLF's "Alternative Ulster" and "God Save The Queen"), drummer Andy Laing ("New Rose" by The Damned and, er, "Ne Ne Na Na Na Nu Nu" by Bad Manners) and bass player Andy, then a veteran of two days' standing, who restores their arthouse credibility somewhat by opting for Killing Joke's excellent "Requiem".

Why did the old bassist (Steven "The Eagle" Charlton) leave, then?

"Cos he had ginger hair, like," deadpans Frankie, "he had ginger hair and his girlfriend said he couldn't go away any more, so he had to leave. His girlfriend actually came and told us, you know, that she was the stronger person of the two of them."

He's not going to be happy about that, is he, having to stay at home in Sunderland instead of travelling the world in a band?

"He'll not be happy sitting in a house with her. Nagging. And she'll soon get sick of him, and all."

Reflective pause.

"As long as he knows what he wants."

How come you got a feature in *Kerrang!*? I ask, trying unsuccessfully to change the subject.

"You didn't fucking see the pictures, did you?" hoots Dickie.

A band that deserves to be in colour, definitely.

"There was *too much* colour on those photos. We look as though we've been to fucking Barbados for a couple of weeks!"

"Eagle's spots didn't half look good though," muses Frankie. "In black and white they didn't show up very much, but in colour, like, they were really fucking colourful. He used to pick them until they bled, and all. I didn't like that, in the back of the van."

In addition to the previously-eulogised quality of the writing and arrangements on *Mush*, the (self-)production and ye olde musicianship are also highly accomplished. Whipping out my Asking For A Punch Hat (backwards baseball cap, naturally) I ask them; are you all quite old then?

"Fucking ancient. Really old."

"None of us are in our thirties, put it that way."

Dickie and Andrew were in a Sunderland punk/HC band called HDQ. Andy the new bass player was actually in top Mike Yarwood combo Snuff, but we won't hold that against him (Leatherface's naff covers - with the exception of "Message In A Bottle", the ghastly original of which could only have been improved - represent the band at the absolute nadir of their capabilities).

"The engineer mixed *Mush* and it sounded fucking rubbish. We had to spend £300 of our own money remixing it."

This leads to the inevitable question about the (let's be clear) utterly flaccid and shite bands with whom certain equally flaccid and shite journalists on the inky have predictably lumped the 'Face. Frankie is unerringly diplomatic, yet still somehow manages to answer the question correctly:

"I know Mega City 4 as people, y'know, I like them - I can't, like, say they're shite, you know what I mean, they're nice people, fine chaps. I haven't got an objective view. They could be complete and utter toss and I'd still go and see them. They're making a living."

What objects do you always carry with you?

"My lighter," gravel-toned Frankie, with Marlboro.

"Drum key"

"My diary, but I haven't got it," offers Dickie, "this is the first time I haven't had it in years. Well, not in years, cos it's only this year's, like." (fanzine and inky writers note cunning deployment of apostrophes here - Ed)

Do you write in your diary every day?

"No, it's not a *diary*, it's not a diary in that respect. That's student clobber, that, innit, really... writing stuff you've been doing every day, that's a bit steep. A bit pretentious. No, I just write dates of what's going on. It's more like an organiser, really."

What do the N and W stand for?

"Norman Warsaw."

Always ask a band about their pets. You never know what you might learn. Andrew the drummer has "a pit bull whippet thing" called Zoltan ("GO, ZOLTAN, YOU HAVE OFFENDED ME!") and a pure Staffordshire called Tina. Frankie, on the other hand, who enjoys the company of "two or three cats", doesn't like dogs much. At all.

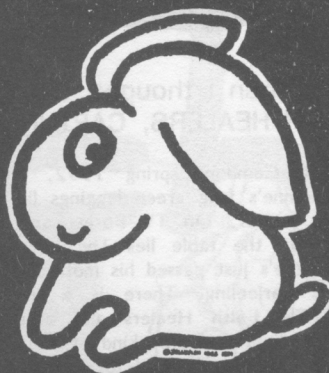
"Basically a rubbish animal, the dog. Come round sniffing your genital area the whole time. Apparently, dogs have only got a memory for eleven faces. Useless. You piss off for a few weeks, it's met a few people, it's forgotten you. You've got to take them for walks. "Come on, Fido." It's only got eleven faces in its fucking thick skull. Now, cats don't remember *anyone*. Cats are fucking brilliant. I had this cat who lived in the same house all his life. When I moved in there, he just moved in with me. When I moved over the road, I took him over with me, and he just moved back. He lives in that house, that's his house. It's going to be a great interview, this, isn't it?"

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Faith

"...then I thought, if I get rid of the flies, who'll eat the bacteria?"
TH' AMAZING FAITH HEALERS, CAPTURED IN WORDS AND CHARCOAL BY TH' LOVELY MO BOTTOMLY

It's Sunday evening in Camden, spring 1992, and it's been pissing down all day. Roxanne's frog green leggings lie steaming on the small cream electric heater. On TV Forest and Spurs wade through a sea of mud. On the table lies The Loveblobs record, alongside a crash helmet (Joe's just passed his motorbike test) and a refreshing pot of finest darjeeling. There is a great similarity between the music of Th' Faith Healers and a pot of finest darjeeling: strong, piquant, slightly smokey kind of stuff produced by subtle blends and delicate infusions, brewed for just the right length of time in a lovely, warm container, and pouring forth in a magnificent golden brown stream. Then, just when your senses are accustomed to the full and rich flavour, you get a gob full of tart brown leaves that taste like shit.

Mo: Joe, do you think your room is a true reflection of yourself?
Joe: I'm afraid so, yes. It's falling to pieces... it's messy...
Mo: It's neat in places, and a kind of L-shape (play the record and notice the similarity with his drumming).
Joe: My only complaint is the constant traffic. I really appreciate the value of silence sometimes.
Mo: Do you meditate?
Joe: No.
Mo: Do you sometimes wander off into dreams and fantasies when you listen to a record?
Joe: Yes, that's what they're there for.
Tom: Roxanne meditates.
Mo: Oh, do you have a mantra?
Rox: No, I just like to sit down and create my own space. It's just kind of erasing the bullshit in your head.
Mo: Is it ever possible to erase *all* the bullshit in your head?
Rox: If you're really disciplined, possibly. But I don't think you can ever really meditate in London. It gets so manic that you can get really confused and frustrated. Sometimes I get so wound up.
Mo: Can it sometimes help you creatively to be wound up?
Rox: Yes, I think so. I deal with it a lot better now. In the band I really get rid of a lot of frustration and anger by just dancing and singing. It's an excellent release, it's not painful and I enjoy doing it. And I don't hurt anyone else doing it.

This is one of the nicest aspects of this band: the music is extreme, creative and energetic, as indeed are the live shows, but it is never violent. How typical that a band like Guns 'N' Roses tries so hard to be musically violent but ends up being as terrifying as a burst crisp packet.

Tom: A lot of people misinterpret us and say "Why are you so violent?", but they've usually been in the bar all night.
Joe: It's more that we're intense. It's really good that it's possible to separate intensity from physical violence, i.e. actually wanting to hurt someone.
Mo: It's a jumble sale intensity, the rush of excitement as you dive into a pile of clothes.
Tom: Although they can get violent. I usually suffer a swift elbow in the ribs...
Rox: I've noticed the increase of violence in the world in the past few years. At this rate humans are going to destroy themselves.
Tom: Violence has an effect even in nonviolent people because they get fucked off by it.

Rox: Exactly. You can end up being violent to yourself as well.
Tom: Yes... but even though the world's violent, I can still get on with it. I do have a great time, I'm not unhappy.

Tom certainly doesn't come across as a picture of unhappiness. He can be seen striding down wet London streets with the brim of his "Indiana Jones" hat pulled firmly down over his eyes, missing lamp posts and phone engineers' holes by millimetres.

Mo: What's your room like?
Tom: My house belongs to my parents. I have a room in it and it's very messy. I gradually crawl throughout the whole house taking up all the space until they throw a wobbly...
Joe: And beat you back into your room again!
Mo: Like a fungus or a weed?
Tom: More like a bacterium. Actually, I get a bit of inspiration from bacteria. I brushed a spider's web off the window and then I remembered that I had flies in the room, so I'd have to get rid of the flies if I got rid of the spiders. So I thought: I should have left the spiders there. Either that or I disinfect the whole room!

Whether this inspiration was for songwriting or life skills isn't made clear by Tom, but the human race is much in need of such artistic analyses at the moment. Ozone depletion is having a dramatic effect on the plankton community, and if this gets any worse, we're in trouble! We've already all but wiped out the whales at the other end of the chain, just to make lipstick. Why we couldn't have used raspberries I'll never know.

Mo: Roxanne - what elements do you draw on to write the songs?
Rox: Usually Tom, cos he writes most of them! I say "Tom, let's sit down and write songs," then he writes them and I say, "Yeah, that sounds great!"
Tom: What have you drawn on for the songs that you have written?
Rox: I went through a phase of writing really strong anti-politics stuff, but I don't really have that stance any more. I find it really difficult to write songs... err, what songs have I written?
Tom: What about "Super"?
Rox: "Super" is quite surreal in the sense that it's not straight lyrics saying "I love you, blah blah blah", we don't usually incorporate the general subjects for songwriting. Tom's got a wild imagination, he likes certain words and he likes rhyming things. "Gorgeous Blue Flower", which Tom wrote, that meant a lot to me; it felt like a beautiful love song, but very sad, very melodramatic... very reflective.

In case you haven't heard it, "Gorgeous Blue Flower" is a magnificent balloon on the head for all the greyness and misery of the 90's, the great "era of mediocrity". Romantic not in a sentimental sense but in a hormonal one, it is a pretty fair depiction of the utter awfulness and the utter joy of being alive. Tom's guitar ranges wide, from lonely subtle chord shifts to great blocks of urgent rampaging thrash, but it is always solid and certain. Elizabethan in it's wider meaning of the word "garden", it's one of the best records ever to lurch around and fall over to.

HEALERS

Tom: We often write the whole song before the words start materialising. The words are often chosen because they sound right for the tune, especially ones that have to hang for a certain amount of time. Generally something comes up in my head and it can be quite surreal, but I like words to mean a bit more than just one thing. Landscape in a song, just to give the listener their own sense of individuality.

Mo: So would you describe yourselves as a great songwriting partnership?

Tom: Yeah, we are a partnership, because when I come up with a tune, Roxanne changes it!

Mo: I won't ask why the songs are so bloody long...

Joe: OK... But there is an answer to that!

Rox: But he's not going to tell you!

Joe: It's because we like playing them. The only good reason to stop a song is when it runs out of steam. Also, the songs develop as you're play them so they often take on their own momentum. Rox: We all feel it as well. If it's a good song we'll all go "Yeah" instinctively.

Going "Yeah" instinctively, as well as being able to go "No" instinctively, seems to me to be one of the great positive outcomes of feminism. (eg: "Do you want to be totally in control of your life, your environment, your finances, your choices, your appearance, your education, your politics, your motorbike?" - "Yeah"; "D'yer fancy commin' back t'ma flat fer a shag darlin', hic?" - "Er, No".) I put it to Roxanne that a band can have a very positive image.

Rox: I've been asked a few times "Are you an aggressive, ranting feminist?", comparing me with Hole or Silverfish, but on the other hand I also get the Earth Mother hippy thing as well. It's very easy to get labelled. There's nothing to say that people can't see it like that. I think there is a general reaction. I think we're all quite glad to be alive, so it's like "Let's have a celebration"!

Joe: A lot of the time people get the wrong end of the stick.

Mo: What's the wrong end of the stick?

Joe: When people interpret what you do as some sort of cynical career move,

or as just "Ah.. it's all a laugh", y'know, one big joke, which is also wrong. We get labelled as "no hope jolly rockers", that kinda thing!

Mo: Yet even though it's uncontrived and probably unintentional, Silverfish do have a very positive image.

Joe: Yes, but it's not what they set out to do. They're just doing "it", and a by-product of that is that people have to accept that they're a strong uncompromising band who have a girl singer. It's not played up but at the same time the formula is an important part of the band.

Tom: They've taken a strong sex angle recently, haven't they?

Joe: Lesley's certainly taken a strong sex angle recently!

Tom: And Fuzz as well!

How long will it be before the music press start writing about the "Camden Renaissance"? Instead of little blue plaques Camden Council should produce signs shaped like deafened ears saying things like "This marks the spot where Miki B. bought her first packet of L'Oreal 'Born Fluorescent Red' Shampoo'n'Dye", or "Gallon Drunk were sick in this post box" and so on. At the moment Camden has more bands crowded into one small area than barnacles on the snout of a Grey Whale.

Mo: What's your room like?

Rox: It varies. I share a squat with Martin from Headcleaner: I've got a room full of books - it's quite bare... a desk, a record player, two cats...

Mo: How do you stop them sitting on your typewriter?

Rox: I chuck them out of the room! They're worse when you're trying to read and they come and sit on the article.

Mo: Why do they do that?

Tom: It's obvious: "You can't give a newspaper more attention than me!"

Joe: Yes: "Don't look at that, I'm more important... I'm furry!"

Mo: Describe how you look on stage.

Tom: Joe looks great.

Joe: I get self conscious because (as the drummer) I'm the only one with any light on them. I suddenly think "Oh my god, what do I look like?"

Tom: When you see drummers you usually notice their arms moving. I never even see Joe's arms moving because the whole bloody thing's around all over the place!

Joe: Yes, it's a whole body experience!... Ben's more like a tree, very rooted.

Tom: Sometimes he puts on a frown and nods his head as though he's saying "This is all going dreadfully wrong."

Ben: No I'm not! I'm just getting into it.

Rox: I don't know what I'd see Tom as, really...

Tom: Herman

Munster? Spock?

Mo: What's Roxanne like?

Tom: A mass of hair that hits you in the face now and then!

Almost immediately a Faith Healers gig races into action like some sort of bizarre Duchampian device, a hive of colours, noises, short trousers and swooshing hair. It's all tremendously uplifting, as though your least favourite Tesco's security guard had skidded over on a split packet of frozen peas, totally destroying this week's promotion. The odd catastrophic single note from Ben's bass faills like the final tin of pear halves, inevitably, onto the stricken guard's head. A clue to the cubism lies in Ben's private life.

CONTINUES OVER



Art: GO

Faith Healers Continued

Ben: Well, I live at my mum's at the moment... amongst lots of cardboard boxes. It's a tiny room, about 15 feet by 6 feet. Just a bed and boxes, basically.

Mo: What's been the best moment of this year?

Ben: I don't know really, everything! Especially The Venue, the atmosphere was excellent.

Tom: Yes, and he had his bum pinched.

Ben: I don't remember that.

Mo: Tom, describe your first kiss.

Tom: What, snog?

Mo: Yes, snog... proper...

Tom: She was called Sarah... or maybe it was Lisa... yes, it was Lisa. My best friend fancied this girl in another house and he couldn't go and see her on his own, so he'd always take me along. I went along and thought "Mm... I can see your point!". After about three or four visits we snogged.

Rox: That's terrible!

Tom: Yes, and I've got worse and worse

Mo: Was it what you expected it to be?

Tom: It was good. It was really nice.

Mo: Roxanne, have you had any good dreams lately?

Rox: Yes, I write most of them down. I had one recently where I was eating a huge bucket of taramasalata. It was so real I could taste it! It was so disgusting it was so vivid and so pink. We sell it in the sandwich bar and everytime I see it I feel sick.

Mo: Tell me how you feel on your bike, Joe.

Joe: It's fun and it's scary and it's kind of an extension of your extremities...

Tom: Oh no, how phallic!

Joe: It's pretty sad if it is - have you seen my motorbike? It's got a will of its own. Oh dear, I've answered that really badly!

Mo: Be more romantic.

Joe: Well, it's doing something mechanical with machines, and it's mine. It would be even better to have a car, then I wouldn't get a wet bum.

More than anything the formula of four individuals working well together creatively epitomises the relaxed and straightforward output of Th' Faith Healers. You know it's not, but they make it all look so easy, and so much fun. Because they don't all have the same haircut or shirts, the only thing they end up looking is human (or half-human, half-sea anemone in Roxanne's case).

Tom: Bands that wear the right clothes and play the right music don't last very long.

Mo: Yeah, they're just brands of biscuit really.

Tom: The Garibaldis and the Crawfords of pop. I mean, you can eat the packet but you can't eat the contents.

This is heavily reminiscent of a recent interview in which Des O'Connor is quoted as saying "The brightest star in the sky burns out the fastest. The most difficult thing to do is let things happen in their own time." Luckily Th' Faith Healers are happening now so we won't have to wait the aeons we would have to wait before Des O'Connor does anything relevant. We simply wait like hungry macaques for those delicious fruits, the first of which are only beginning to ripen. Ultimately, the band's philosophy, a mixture of homely realism and a thirst for passion and freedom, like a slipper on acid, points to a sparkling future.

Tom: I think we all know in the back of our minds that there's so much else we can do, it would be ridiculous to say we'll split up if I broke Joe's leg because I hated him so much. There's too much to be done.

Rox: At the moment it means quite a lot for me, because I left the band for a while and then I realised how much of a part it was, how much it meant to me that I was actually getting something out of life... I just really like the music.

Joe: I'm not in such a hurry as I used to be. I used to think "You are going to die very soon!", so I had to do everything right now and I got really impatient with everybody and myself. I thought you have to do it all now and leave your mark on the world. The most important thing is to keep moving forward. If you have too strong an idea of direction or where you want to end up then you miss out on things along the journey. It's all good because you're putting yourself in a situation where you don't know what's going to happen next.

Mo: Isn't that a good way to run your life anyway?

Joe: Yeah, exactly.

Rox: Adventure!

TH'DISCOGRAPHY: "Jesus Freak" on PURE 1 *Now That's What I Call Disgusting Music* Compilation LP. PURE 2 *Popsong 12" EP* (Pop Song / Delores / Slag). PURE 3 *A Picture Of Health EP* (Gorgeous Blue Flower In My Garden / Not A God / God You Move (In Mysterious Ways)). PURE 6 *In Love EP* (Reptile Smile / Super / Lovely). PEUR 11(?) Compilation CD of nearly all the single tracks (availability limited to 1,000 in this country). The LP (working title: *The Difficult First Album*).



HELLO!! WOULD YOU LIKE TO BUY A FANZINE?

The highly judgemental approach to fanzines that we employed in the last issue, with divisions between "the best" and "the rest", and the awarding of points based on very arbitrary standards, was criticised by some readers. I am aware that such opinionated treatment, while appreciated when applied to everyday scapegoats (such as the major press and successful bands), cannot be tolerated when applied to things considered in some way worthy (usually due to their lack of popularity). However, I see no virtue in encouraging the inept to do what they are clearly bad at, and I find no pleasure in the work of individuals living under self-imposed restrictions. Rather than trying to over-reach their abilities, most fanzine writers set out with the idea that they are capable of little, and go on to fail themselves. I guess nobody told them they could step out of line and do something a little different from everyone else. It could be that I'm just nostalgic for a time when fanzines told you to bog off and had exclamation marks in their titles. Whatever, due to public demand, here are some thoughtful, caring and less openly abusive fanzine reviews.

These A5 fanzines are a delight to behold. Like 7" singles, they're so cute and delicious: Eighth time on the planet: **PLANE TRUTH #8.** It's caught us up agewise already! Here, Andrew continues to play with an intricate necklace of long words. He experiences music, people, books and films, and is compelled to communicate their inspiring qualities by packing as much meaning into each sentence as he possibly can. Sometimes this style falls over itself, but if you stick with it you get to eat the juicy fruit of understanding. In this issue he interrogates Shudder To Think, Polly Harvey, 70 Gwen Party and Nerve Rack; Jennifer Brogan writes a sexy Mercury Rev piece and Greg of Quality Time contributes a snazzy cent spread Rev poster. Also reviews, excellent fiction and an interview with me (!?). All this for 30p and A5 SAE to: Andrew, 18 Golf View, Preston, PR2 7EH. (K)

KILL YR GIRLFRIEND (OR SHE'LL KILL YOU FIRST) I like the multicoloured paper this is printed on, and the clear text and the way that it's cut into strips over interesting backgrounds. It's produced by a young tyke who calls himself DMCL and who runs the cute Fluff noise pop label. Features uninteresting music criticism and some interviews (form insists that I list the bands featured: Boyracer, Librarian, oh I don't know). At least he shows some awareness of the Sex War. (50p & A5 SAE from 86, Parklands Drive, Loughborough, Leics LE11 2TD.) (K)

FAR OUT AND FISHY #5 - I can't argue with this, oh no I can't. Chris' style is light and lovely, he whisks us around the sights and likes of Langfield Crane, The Go-Betweens, Ant-Bee, Love and Emily with a gut full of energy and a great sense of beauty. His friend Robert produces a fine guide to the works of David Lynch, and Chris even interviews The Pastels, The Orb and Another Sunny Day, although his musical descriptions are just as charming. If not more interesting, than what the people in bands say. This issue's dead old, but still a wonderfully informative and life affirming read, for only 50p. Send it, with an A5 SAE, to Chris Fish Bowl, 16 Marsh Lane, Oxford, OX3 0NF. (K)

FURTHER TOO... boasts that it features pop, sex, football and culture. It's appealing at first, with a neat layout, but on further inspection it turns out to be a very bitty arrangement of things. Pop = record and gig reviews, Pitch Shifter, Some Velvet Sidewalk interviews and a weird trailing off Daisy Chainsaw article, sex -, well I can't find it in here, but I'm sure some of this is sexy for some people, football = an interview with a Russian football supporter, and culture = book and fanzine reviews and weird stuff about malliart and the Pope being the devil. This fanzine could be really good. (50p & A5 SAE from 40 Darwin Court, Barlow St, London SE17 1HR.) (K)

OPEN YOUR EYES #1. I like this a lot, it has a lively and innocent charm and features some really cool bands like Pavement and Thinking Fellers Union Local 282 (earning it 3000 points on our fab-o-meter!), plus Beatnik Filmstars and Boyracer and The Pooh Sticks and loads more. It reminds me of the first *Abazael*, maybe just cos of the yellow cover, but I say it has potential, which is always a great thing to conceal up your sleeve. 30p and A5 SAE to Huv Davey, 4 Langdale Close, Wetherby, W. Yorks LS22 4VE. (K)

GARBLES #2. This brilliantly named thing has vibrant, energetic pictures and cartoons, weird newspaper cuttings, a picture of an extraordinarily pierced penis, zine and gig reviews and an interview with All You Can Eat, and weird record reviews - this girl is a dodgy yankophile so likes lots of dodgy HC stuff, but get this - she even likes Poopshovel. Weird. Get hold of a copy anyway, its free if you send her a zine or a tape or something nice: Ros, 5 New House Close, Canterbury, Kent CT4 7HO. (K)

LESS THAN BRAINLESS #1. Guaranteed to induce strained eyes and aching back muscles if you're interested in any of the bands featured (Who? Oh - Boo Radleys, Citizen Fish, 5.30, Fudge Tunnel and loads more) due to the poor quality of the copying and the size of the print, but worth the trouble if you can tolerate the rather unappealing layout and the 'it's-on-the-tape-it-must-be-in-the-article' approach to writing. (40p and A5 SAE from 28 Summerdown Road, Eastbourne, E.Sussex BN20 8DR.) (G)

NOSEBLEED #5 and SPIDER MITES. Nosebleed! Interviews Scott Youth, Chumbawamba and NoMeansNo. In spite of the obvious limitations of living in a country most bands don't seem to know exists, the whole thing is enthusiastic and worth reading, especially for the Mr. Nobody cartoon strip and the slightly silly 'Do You Know Your Hardcore?' quiz. And no, I don't, before you ask.

Spider Mites is one single cartoon strip about (violent, militaristic, men-only) human liberation movements set up some time in the future to oppose the increasing power of capitalism. Unfortunately, the bits of it which are actually penetrable are extremely tedious. (30p and 50p plus A5 SAEs from 37 Chalfont Road, Malahide, Co. Dublin, Ireland.) (GB)

ABUSE #2. These people are geniuses; every interview ends up having more to do with Carter USM than the bands interviewed, so I'm not going to even bother telling you who they are. And while we're on the subject, 'What's your favourite venue?' is a crap question, although I suppose anybody who hates Kingmaker can't be all bad. (A4, £1 inc p&p from Steven Siddie, 17 Muskham St, Meadows, Nottingham NG2 2HB.) (G)

BAGS OF STICKS AND CANDY STICKS #1. Not much to recommend in spite of the editor's fine name; interviews with Len Liggins and Ted Chippington as well as a couple of reviews. Not much else, and I suspect the whole lot would have fitted on a couple of pieces of A4. (60p and A5 SAE from Gavin, 210 Borough Road, Middlesbrough, Cleveland TS1 2EQ.) (G)

UGLY #1. I hate slagging off first issues but somebody has to do it. Probably. Apart from a good cartoon strip (Trashed), which takes up two sides when half a page would have been more appropriate, and interviews with The Levellers and Chumbawamba, there's not much here to justify the entrance fee and no discernible style or wit in the reviews either. (50p and A4 SAE to Flat 4, 11 Oakroyd Terrace, Bradford, BD5 7AE.) (G)

UMPH! #1. You need this like you need leprosy; compiled by some sado who thinks women's breasts, farting and Ronnie Corbett's penis are ground-breaking areas for comedy. Worse than you can possibly imagine. (50p and A4 SAE to 16 Glebe Road, West Bridgford, Nottingham, NG2 6DS.) (G)

PROGRESSION. Includes flexi featuring Screaming Custard and Dead Famous People. Interviews with The Poppuns, The Family Cat, The Senseless Things and The Charlottes and as well as a muddled piece on Babes In Toyland but at least some effort has been put into this and it takes more than ten minutes to read: especially if like me you despise all of the bands featured. (50p and A4 SAE to Greg Herriot, 73 Clarence Road North, Benfleet, Essex SS7 1HT.) (G)

e.p. #3. Bland. Access to top quality printing and lots of record company freebies to give away seems to have effectively suffocated anything approaching criticism, so you get reviews of everything from Bad Religion to UB40 and guess what, it's all lovely! Even Midge Ure. (A4, £1.50 inc p&p to Vigilante Productions, 8c Park Villas, Brampton Road, Huntingdon, Cambs PE18 8BQ.) (G)

PAGAN PRATTLE #10. Mostly about misad ritual abuse cases but also stuff about fundamentalist attacks on occult shops and rock music, details of pagan groups and publications, and reviews of music, beer and literature. Free for an A5 SAE to Feorag NIBride, Box 333, 52 Call Lane, Leeds LS1 6DT. (K)

INCREDIBLY INEDIBLE #3. The Captain America interview included here is described by the author as a "full blown love-in with three different publications"; listen, mate, as one of those publications present, if that's what qualifies as a love-in in Manchester then I'm glad I don't live there. Less controversial Moose, Teenage Fanclub and American Music Club interviews are also featured. An incredibly frustrating 'zine in that parts are very well written and the whole thing is enthusiastic, but the whole is far less than the sum of the parts. Whatever that means. (50p and A5 SAE to Jackie and Mhcheal, 53 Matthias Court, Silk St, Salford M3 6JE.) (G)

TRASHCAN #2. Readable and mostly entertaining. If somewhat unadventurously presented: includes interviews with Carter and Neds for those that want them, plus Pram, Gumball, Boo Radleys and American Music Club (Etzel: "...intra-serious now, if I don't have a chin and if my face is in repose, I look very, very sad."). Includes a fourteen track cassette of West Midlands combos. (A4, Chris and Ros Ullman, Lillac Cottage, Exhall, Alcester, Warwickshire B49 6EA - no price on it so try £1.50 and extra postage for the tape.) (L)

OVERALL There is A Smell Of Fried Onions (no.1, vol.2) is a local listings mag, but it's actually pretty good. From the full colour, extremely lifelike cover photo of the table scene (ash tray, rizzle packet and grinning playing card) on in, it's quality stuff: loads of record and demo reviews, a feature on blippy blippy music in Nottingham, an Aldous Huxley article (distinguished contributors here!) and the weirdest editorial piece I've ever seen. It's free in Nottingham but I think foreigners might have to pay a little more, so send 'em 50p and a nice letter and see what happens. P.O. Box 73, West PDO, Nottingham NG7 4DG. (K)

UNHINGED #9. Interviews Faith Over Reason, Gumball and The Dambuilders (whose previous incarnation, The Exatones, had a tune called "Approach The Horse, Sexually"). It says here) and includes a pull-out supplement with 592 (it says here) reviews in miniscule type. The guy who does it is clearly a total expert on obscure American rock, but his dry and humourless style begins to drag long before you reach Review No. 592. Design-wise, it looks like a parish magazine, too. Flexi by somebody called AED. (A4, £1.60 from Paul, The Old Schoolhouse, Yatesbury, Nr. Caine, Wilts SN11 8YE.) (L)

RAPTURE #1. The person who does this omitted to print their address on the 'zine... still, if your cooking up essays with titles like "Dance, Noise And The Frigidity Of Post-Valentism" maybe you don't have time for the gritty practicalities. Yes, it's a cerebral one, and while it's hardly *Monitor* there are some good ideas among the unruly verbiage. Includes a defence of Pop Techno (as against the hip stuff), a 70 Gwen Party i/v and some pretty impenetrable ramblings about, er, iconoclasm and the Moment of Pop. If you've got time for the Simon Reynolds and Chris Bohns of this world, you may as well spend fifteen minutes reading this. (L) (Found it! Try 50p and an A5 SAE to Julian, 35 Buckingham Rd, Brighton BN1 3PQ.) (K)



DREGS #5. This zine is so good, my heart swelled with joy when it arrived and I took all morning off work to read it. It really means a lot to me to see something done so well. In case you don't know Dregs, it's the publication that loves to ask weird questions, like *why is time changing speed?* and *what about the freak weather terror conditions?* and *what are your sexual fantasies?* and *what is true love?* which is the question of this issue (I mean, compare it to *why did you sign to a major label?* and *do you think punk's really dead?*). And these questions aren't just asked to scraggly haired guitarists and drummers; it's open to everyone - Duncan seems print all the weird letters and contributions he gets. This veritable *Cosmopolitan* of the Anarcho/Indie scene has now gone A4. It's even got a glossy cover and proper typesetting! The line up of bands features is eclectic: Babes In Toyland, Silverfish, Discharge, Daisy Chainsaw, Carter, Scorpio Rising, Ned's Atomic Dustbin, Extreme and The Levellers. There's also a hilarious Mykel Board contribution and a surreal photo love story (in my copy the words "Well alligators eat dogs don't they?" have been painstakingly glued in). You really really must buy this fanzine. it's only £1 including postage, so you don't have to mess around with SAEs, to Duncan, P.O.Box 110, Liverpool L69 8DP. (K)

All this SAE business a bit taxing? Two suggestions: either contact a distributor, like those listed below, for a list (gotta send them a SAE I'm afraid, or at least a stamp), or just bung on an extra 30p or so to cover the cost of sending the thing to you. It's as easy as, erm, writing a letter.

TOP DISTRIBUTORS - write nice letters to these people:
Anthony, KBHM Inc, 5 Cross Normanton St, Wakefield WF4 5EN. (The Abazael zine distribution division, therefore highly recommended.)
Paul, BIJOOPITER, 2 Wentworth Rd, Hertford SG13.
Paul, FISHEY, 437a High Road Leyton, Leyton, London E10 5EL.
Ian, TONGUE IN CHEEK, 55 Albion St, Otley, W. Yorks LS21 1BZ.

A WARNING TO FANZINE WRITERS: Be wary of approaching distributors not recommended here or by other trusted sources, because unfortunately a lot of these people are in the business of taking your zines and then refusing to pay you for them. So unless you can afford to pay the printer out of your dole money so that these scum can make money out of you, call us to check before using an unknown distributor. Also, let us know which ones have ripped you off, and we'll compile a big list of them for publication in the next issue. Hopefully in this way we can stop them. The weird thing is, they're probably sitting around in smug self praise, thinking that they're *doing something for the alternative scene...*



RECORD REVIEWS

THE WEDDING PRESENT *Blue Eyes 7"* (BMG)

Dull. I'd been led to expect a poppy production number courtesy of the much-touted Chris Nagle, but "Blue Eyes" sounds small and shy, despite the neat twiddly guitar riff which opens and closes proceedings with some panache. Perhaps this is partly due to their persistence in mixing the vocals at sub-audible levels; though with Gedge dragging out his Liz-Fraser-in-Song-To-The-Siren mannerism (as featured on a third of *Seamonsters*) for yet another airing, this might not be a bad thing. Their limp mugging of The Go-Betweens' beautiful, atmosphere-laden "Cattle And Cane" will make them more enemies than Salman Rushdie, and deservedly. Nothing's sacred, quite so: but do the song some fucking justice. (LN)

THE WEDDING PRESENT *Go-Go Dancer 7"* (RCA)

The one that wasn't on 'Top Of The Pops' and also my favourite of the first three singles. [Relativity's a fascinating concept: apparently if you went into space then you would get old at a slower rate than if you stayed on Earth. (But then you'd miss numbers four to twelve)] The singing's crap of course, but this chugs along quite nicely and I guess I will work out what it reminds me of the second this magazine goes off to the printers. The other advantage that this has over its predecessor is that the cover version on the B side is not only a song I've never heard, but I don't like Neil Young anyway! (GB)

THE WEDDING PRESENT *Three 7"*

For this one, their third in the mammoth save-the-seven-inch-and-make-it-even-trendier campaign, Gedge abandons his traditional fiercely hardcore monogamy trip with the lyrics and suggests the possibility that "three have a better time." Well, I suppose it depends what you're doing and which two people you're doing it with. (KA)

GREEN BEAVER *No Horseplay EP/CD* (Shagpile)

Initially thinking that, soundwise, Green Beaver were coming from early 80's US hardcore, it struck me that, were they still there, they would doubtlessly fare better than they do here in the 90's. Then I discover that they're Australian, and perhaps the lapsed time warp vibe of this is thus explained. Nirvana may well love them, but for me a fine line is being trodden here, with equally great potential being shown for becoming instantly dismally dated and destined for the kind of obscurity that only a *Maximumrock'n'roll* scene report can appreciate, or successfully channelling their energy and reconstructing their standard hardcore elements into something seriously great. I hope they fall on their feet and not their faces. (M)

DILLON FENCE *Christmas EP/CD* (Mammoth)

Loth as I am to rely heavily on reference points, there is only one possible way to describe this... Aztec Camera gone terribly and horribly wrong. (M)

SWEET JESUS *Phonefreak Honey 12"* (Rough Trade)

Bubblegum of such insubstantiality that the flavour is gone after a couple of chews. A few more, er, *ideas* wouldn't have gone amiss. The bloke's hair is too silly, as well: when I saw his picture in *Siren*, I had to take a cold shower to stop myself laughing. (LN)

VARIOUS *Three Minute Heroes LP* (Virgin)

"20 of the finest Punk and New Wave singles," offers the sleeve. It's a good job Virgin's appalling design department (somebody was paid for this?) included that catch-all "New Wave" clause, or they'd be facing litigation under the Trade Descriptions Act. How else to justify the inclusion of such trad toss as Joe Jackson's "Is She Really Going Out With Him?", The Boomtown Rats' "Rat Trap" and The Motors? On the plus side, there's The Rutts with "Babylon's Burning" (check that Fugazi influence!), The Rezillos' inane-but-fun "Top Of The Pops", the infectious paranoia of Magazine's "Shot By Both Sides" and Public Image Limited's eponymous debut (still one of the very best guitar sounds ever).

There's an excellent, and utterly timeless, LP of punk rock's finest three-minute bulletins to be compiled, but this isn't it. Where's "Complete Control", "Holidays In The Sun", Subway Sect's "Ambition", Wire's "12XU", The Adverts' "Great British Mistake"? Anything off 'Live At The Witch Trials'? The Slits' "Typical Girls"? The Mekons' "Where Were You"? This corporate repackaging exercise woefully misrepresents the era as nothing more than quirky, energetic pop, when in fact it was an unprecedented (in rock) attack of cultural glossolalia, a time in which new languages were forged as if out of nowhere. I would venture (despite the new party line at King's Reach Tower, which states that 'punk has finally worked its way out of rock's system') that the musical impact of 1976-80 is still not fully realised. Arch retro-fetishist Bobby Gillespie sums this up perfectly: "All the great white rock music of the past has been influenced by black music, but post-punk music has lost track of that influence." Dead right, pal, and we've got lots more "losing track" to do yet. It's called "progress". No Elvis, Beatles or the Rolling Stones, remember? (LN)

DAISY CHAINSAW *Love Sick Pleasure EP 12"* (Deva)

"Love Your Money", unlike anything by Blur or Ride or any of our (ha!) groups who've had similar flirtations with The Man, was a true oddity in the banal world of daytime radio by virtue of its raw spontaneity; trite enough though it certainly is to fit most of Wond'ful One's dreadful criteria. The two songs on the B side are considerably more left-field, particularly the romping "Sick Of Sex" with Crispin Gray's stomach-wrenching guitar; although they too manage to include sufficient melodic and lyrical hooks to keep the popkids who don't like Hole (i.e. me) interested. Katie Jane Garside ("love that loony", patronising? me? Steve Sutherland) is an entertaining, if excruciatingly mannered, singer: it's a shame that anybody old enough to remember Toyah will be squirming with embarrassment for her. (LN)

THINKING FELLERS UNION LOCAL 282 *Where's Officer Tuba? MLP* (Hemiola)

The song this begins with is fine. Quivelly sounds, persistent Dustdevil guitars, and a weirdly pitched vocal. In the second number (this is a pre-release tape and I lost the tracklisting) you can hear a knot of fighting strings; no, they're doing the okey cokey, joining together and splitting up and the singer is climbing an upside down guitar staircase inhabited by rats but he doesn't care, he's drunk. And the Dustdevils are there again and he's singing high up again. The third one is the squeaky mice one, the one you should or shouldn't listen to when you're feeling confused and your friend comes into the room and says "What are you doing?" in an alarmed tone upon hearing such a strange sound. Here the singer is slowly wrapping a cable round his neck and recording his own slow death. Time takes on different speeds at various stages of the process and the squeaking is magnanimous. No, I mean it. But now I'm taking these pills to calm me down and it *really* does help. It collapses into a waking scene where fifteen strange things happen more or less simultaneously. Then a brief silence and a little tune just asking for a TV series about hardware shops to adopt it as their theme. Then there's the one about the bees, which I know for a fact is called "Hive", is warm and lazy and excellent; it's my favourite here. Afterwards things get even more complicated by the minute, and my puzzlement barrier is exceeded. Maybe because they're the Thinking Fellers they don't want anybody else to be able to think, so they make really confusing music so that the rest of the world has to sit in a corner being fairly quiet for ages after hearing it. What do you think? Let me know when you've listened to your copy. That's it, we'll have a competition to find the best answer and the winner can have tea and scones with Justine. Get to it. (KA)

(£6 including postage from Hemiola, 35 Barbrough St, Leeds LS4 2QY.)

PASSING CLOUDS *Protect Your Baby Ears EP 12"* (Bite Back!)

I like things with unpolished, unsure vocals; they remind me of Fluff, and this is one reason for my interest in these Passing Clouds. Another is the expertly jangling minor chords, the boy's attempted (and failed) Gerard Langley impression, and the girl's complimentary screen of melody. It's obvious that the boy cannot sing, and that their lyric writing isn't gunna win them any literary awards just yet, but they've got something and I really really like the sound of it. Come on down, Passing Clouds, rain on us! (KA)

(Bite Back! 51 Bath Rd, Southsea, Hants PO4 0HX.)

SCUM PUPS *Babykill MLP* (Sycophant)

Tuneful, dull, sub-Fugazi throb grunge. They have a song called "Get A Life" which goes "Get a life, get a life, get a life..." Well, what do you expect me to say to that? They threatened to beat up my friend Greg Quality Time if I slagged off their wreckid, well I'm not bowing down to this kind of bullshit so I've advised him to leave the country for a while. The curvy sneaksbies! (KA)

(Sycophant, 8 Orchard St, Newthorpe, Nottingham NG16 2EL)

MANIC STREET PREACHERS *Generation Terrorists DLP* (Sony)

They're *not* generation terrorists, for a start. If anything they're terrorising their *own* generation with this old, old music; with their tedious love of "classic" 60s and 70s rock long since robbed of the context which made it exciting. Even a band like Nirvana, hardly the most groundbreaking of musical propositions, seems positively futuristic compared with this lot. Not since... oh, say the Teenage Fanclub LP... have so many knackered clichés been crammed into one release by a supposedly "happening" band. They can all go choke on their miserable reverence for the past, because that's the very cholesterol in the arteries (hey! Manics-type image! I'm getting the hang of this already) of the seriously obese and sickly creature they describe without irony as "rock'n'roll".

That said, there are some moments on this record: probably enough to have made a half-decent single LP (no less retro, it's true: only the US version of "Repeat" and the drum textures on "Love's Sweet Exile" make any concessions to the present). As it is, there's so much filler it's nearly impossible to endure all four sides in one sitting. Apart from the aforementioned tracks, I'll admit to soft spots for their "You Love Us" taunt, the widescreen pop of "Little Baby Nothing" and the ludicrous "Nat West-Barclays-Midland-Lloyds" (Q: how much of this band's appeal is comic? To what extent is this intentional?) but, really, I'm just trying to be nice. For all their obvious intelligence, their ability to fill endless entertaining column inches, they haven't come up with enough memorable tunes (even within the undemanding parameters of MTV-friendly yankophile corporate cocksucking soft rock) to give their rhetoric the populist bite it obviously aspires to. (LN)

GIRLS AGAINST BOYS *Nineties Vs. Eighties LP* (Adult Swim)

Eighties is the funkier side (hardcore people playing funky; grislly voice shouting, plus Public Enemy tricks) and nineties is the far groovier side. "Stay In The Car" even has tinges of Live Skull's serious beauty, where the guitars twist and the vocals get just a bit urgent, but with slabs of hard metal percussion and a fine sense of rhythm throughout, and "Jamie" conjures an image of rock obsessed youth and the chorus, with its siren backing vocals, is full of yearning. This strange grey stone is streaked with gold. And... at least they're aware of the Sex War. (KA)

PALE SAINTS *In Ribbons* LP (4AD)

Another cracker from Pale Saints. It seems that, in Hugh Jones, this band have found the ideal producer for their exquisitely-chiselled melodies and textures: gone is the fuzzy hesitancy which marred their debut, and in its place we get... well, a bit of everything, really.

It opens with an awesome thirty-second wall of guitars, weirdly reminiscent of Pavement's "Heckler Spray", before launching into the single "Throwing Back The Apple", with its see-saw chorus one of several deceptively simple pop numbers on the LP. Between here and "Hunted", which we already know and which closes the first side in fine glacial style, there's the irresistible forward momentum of "Ordeal" (in which a troupe of glockenspiels is frogmarched down a fire escape), the lilting (anybody remember Weekend?) "Thread Of Light" and a chamber orchestra mixed with starburst needlepoint guitars on "Shell": not forgetting Ian's extraordinary non-haiku "There Is No Day", the essential surprise element of which I shan't spoil by attempting to describe it to you.

Side two is even better: moving from "Hair Shoes", here given space to uncoil at its chilling leisure, through the newly spunk-injected (sorry) "Babymaker", Meriel's Muse-y "Liquid" and the arching guitar acrobatics of "Neverending Night", we arrive breathless in pop heaven ("Featherframe") before the closing "A Thousand Stars Burst Open" (surely the first time an epic ballad has been condensed into four lines) glides in on echoed bass chords and spirits us away to the edge of the universe. Unfortunately, what we find there is a rather duff guitar solo, but you can't have everything, and this record has considerably more than its fair share already. (LN)

PALE SAINTS *In Ribbons* LP (4AD)

"I really like your new LP," I told Ian, "but it sounds so fucking much like *Isn't Anything*." He looked hurt, I didn't understand why. "So that's why we spent four months locked away in the studio" he said, adding "I'm glad you're not coming to the pub with us."

But... wait, come back! It's so damn lovely, so warm and golden and voluptuous. I think Gavin mumbled something about it being the greatest LP ever when he swooned into the room just now, and I think I see what he's getting at. Oh Pale Saints. You know, I hated them up until this - there were moments in their sets that would stop my heart and hold me petrified with wonder, but apart from that, I used to get bored. This! The first track is sex, the second track has ace smashing sounds and smashing bell sounds. The stuffed cats are rolling around the furniture in sensual delight. The third song is a love song about Micheal Walsh: "Hey Percy, your beauty..." (for non-Leeds people, "Percy" is what Mercury Rev call our Mikey) sung ever so sweetly by Meriel. I feel proud to live five streets from this person (for non-Leeds people, Leeds 4 is the new hipville in the city, hence the term "The Burley Hill Scene").

What do these Pale Saints people do for fun? Do they like sports, and if so which ones? I imagine them doing graceful swerves down a pure white ski slope, quickly followed by a deep sea diving session. Maybe they are curl-up-catlike-in-front-of-the-fire-with-a-sexy-book types. Maybe they enjoy walking; a Pale Saint for each season, scenes splattered with flecks of white /deep brown/ pale green/ light yellow/ orange/ red /rust /gold... (Oh my god! Clive Gabriel total bullshit award!)

The tones of Ian's voice are too fine for me to describe with my rough, ugly vocabulary, but into those guitars they slide, like golden syrup into the goddest cake mixture... the drum beats fall like raisins, and the production was obviously executed by a superb cook, the glimmering substances delicately beaten with the whisk till they all went frothy...

Bloody scrumptious. Perhaps I can come to the pub next time? (KA)

THE NEON JUDGEMENT *Are You Real* LP (Play It Again Sam)

Not even a question mark. These kids think you can abandon grammar, with their "revolutionary" technobeat and sampled guitars and crap lyrics. Stupidity is no excuse. This is for people who enjoy listening to unstimulating, unambitious sad men locked in plastic studios. (We like our music to be played on authentic wooden acoustic instruments. Oh yes we do.) Disco hits. Human League. Oh you're so weird. You live in the world we like to pretend we're not a part of. Vocals sound so lazy, so ugly, unenigmatic... I'm sorry. I've given up on you, The Neon Judgement. (KA)

(Do you know, the assistant engineer on this record is called Fulton Dingley? - Barry.)

against

NINETIES VS EIGHTIES



SUPER CHUNK *Super Chunk* LP (Matador)

They sound cute, and this record opens like its gonna be *Tha Noize of Tha Nineties*, but it's just *SUB*. You see I've thought long and tough about this, and that's the word (prefix?) which suits them perfectly. Superchunk are seriously sub. Sub what? you snivel. Sub fuckin' everything that was worth listening to. Sub the subtlest things. Sub Teenage Fanclub. Really. They don't come anywhere near the genius of their semi-namesakes Supertramp, and that's clearly what they were aiming for. Oh, I'll come see them when they play, and I'll devour more of their vinyl when the relevant people send it; I'll try to disprove my judgement, but on this evidence, there's just no need for anyone to tear around headlessly. Sorry, folks. (KA)

SUPER CHUNK *No Pocky For Kitty* LP (City Slang)

A better class of grungepop. If you really want to be hip and impress your friends this summer, get into Superchunk now before they release their singles compilation, an LP which is going to put their name on lips across the nation. So there. (M)

PETER JEFFERIES *The Last Great Challenge In A Dull World* LP (Ajax)

I've tried, but this is all by a guy with a posh and serious voice going on with himself; the songs are miserable, flat, poorly recorded (in a garage - while people are fixing cars in it) and sparsely instrumentalised. It's a re-release that was originally out on the trendy NZ label Xpressway, but still. I'm sure less pleasure-seeking people will enjoy this. (KA)

MILHOUS *Set You Free* 12" (110 Pound Productions)

The singer is trying to do a Michael Stipe and is getting a bit sweaty in the process. Possibly a scraggly wolf is hiding in this pile of oddly shaped pop songs. There are bits of tune here but there's something funny about the way he sings "swap my eyes for j-cw-els", and I just can't put my finger on it but I suspect they are up to no good. (KA)
(110 Pound, 96 Gloucester House, Cambridge Rd, London NW6)

THE CROMPTONS *Head On The Block* LP (Cromptone)

Beefheart's dog. Singer Tony's taste in tunes is positively infantile, and this end of the Big Flame lineage here gets lost in an exclusively schizophrenic nursery. Wacky and zany in the original senses. (KA)

CASPAR BRÖTZMAN MASSAKER *Der Abend Der Schwarzen Folklore* EP (Our Choice)

C.B. Massaker's record made me feel rather strange when I was forced to hear it. It made me feel violent. It made me want to smash things. So I went and smashed some things and then I phoned the press officer responsible. "Less of the dodgy subliminals" I suggested, and I told her why I thought this. She seemed pleased. "I'll tell Caspar," she said. "He'll laugh". Caspar will laugh? I wouldn't like to be there when Caspar laughs. Oh no. (KA)

UNREST *Cherry Cherry* 7" (Hemiola)

"Cherry Cherry" is Wedding Present with "Temptation" "Ooh-ooh-o oh's", but "Wednesday and Proud" is utterly wonderful. I used to have a record player that would play the same record over and over again and I really wish it still worked just so I could set it to play this song to me 50 times every afternoon. It's circular and sweet and pretty and light, with the loveliest guitars chiming and jingling lightly in the summer breeze like butterflies and dreamily happy vocals: Mark Robinson, who Justine tells me is ace, sings "I am... Wednesday and proud... the first day of this world" (I think), and you just don't need anything else. The spiral gets bigger and louder and ends in such a way that you've got to put the needle back to the start... just once more... (KA)
(£2.50 including postage from Hemiola, 35 Barnbrough St, Leeds LS4 2QY.)

THE WOULD BE'S *The Wonderful EP* 12" (Decoy)

Sorry. I hate doing this, but a song like "My Radio Sounds Different In The Dark" doesn't have to be so clean. I HATE (among many, many other things) this weak, brash, ugly, sterile pop. And I hate singers who sound like Natalie Merchant. Obviously a heretical statement like that requires some explanation, but the reason probably lies deep in my past; maybe there was a lightly tanned, neatly groomed girl in my class who did everything perfectly, pronounced and spelt all her words without error, who ate triangular sandwiches tidily, who lived utterly without avarice. Had such a person existed, she would have doubtless been carefully avoided by me and my nasty, naughty, strange-smelling friends. I think it's best if all those healthy and obviously happy people like The Would Be's and people like me are spared any further contact with each other. Am I excused? (KA)

SPIRITUALISED *Lager Guided Melodies* (I'm leaving this in - proof Ed 7") (Dedicated)

Strangely, I haven't had to try too hard with this one. Side AA, a remarkably long affair for a couple of inches of plastic, consists of the dreamy "100 Bars (Flashback)", which, like "You Know It's True (Instrumental)", (dig those brackets!) on side A, induces a shimmering placid hazed-over state of mind, with gently ringing guitars appearing and disappearing over a pink whirlwind and barely-audible spoken vocals while flutes and vibrating pieces of metal sing in a misty field in the middle of the night. OH MY GOD! IT'S COMPLETELY ENCHANTING! (Hear the cries of a startled reviewer who never expects any of this stuff to be any good.) I might even play this one again. (KA)

(Unfortunately I did play it again. It was crap hippy bullshit the second time round. Ed)

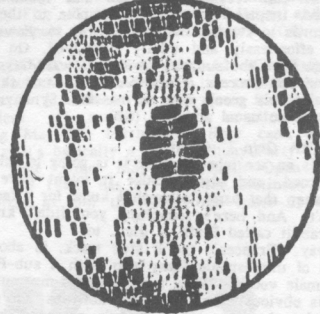
DANIEL JOHNSTON *Artistic Vice* LP (Shimmydisc)

According to the insert, "Daniel is feeling a bit better" these days. I'm glad. This is a first for him, a collection of properly recorded songs with a real backing band. It's much more optimistic and uplifting than anything else I've heard by him. Indeed, Daniel goes so far as to say "every day is Christmas time" at one point; a far cry from the angst of songs like "Desperate Man Blues" and "I Remember Painfully", but then, they were recorded nearly ten years ago. This sounds like *Rubber Soul* Beatles crossed with the Velvet Underground's 3rd LP: simple, emotive songs with hooks that get under your skin. Apparently, not too long ago this man pushed an old lady down a staircase because he believed she was possessed by the devil. Despite this, he remains the pop star I'd most like to meet and swap stories of mental hospital with. (SM)

SMOG/SUCKDOG split single (#1 Hits)

Lisa Suckdog's three tracks on here sound like they were recorded in her sitting room with the aid only of a drug casualty on keyboard. I'm sad to say that they are silly and tuneless and a waste of time, but maybe that's not the point... you see, despite my seeming arrogance and my adherence to a strictly narrow-minded view of music, it does sometimes occur to me that these things may have other meanings to other people. However, I can't begin to guess what they might be, so let's move on to Smog, an altogether slightly more tuneful proposition. "My Shell" is a lonely, existentialist ballad made with the trashiest guitar amps ever and flat, demoralised male vocals. A work of art, in its way. (KA)

(\$5 to Bill Callahan, P.O.Box 1491, Dover NH, 03820 USA)



AMERICAN MUSIC CLUB *Everclear* LP (Alias)

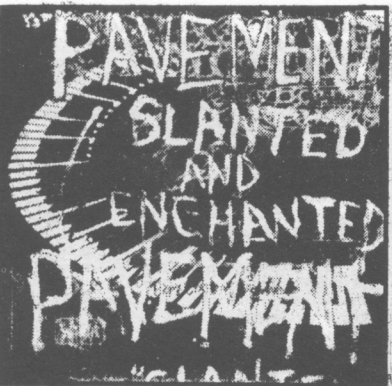
Oh god, where to start with this? Mark Eitzel, "broken-hearted genius" much beloved of journalistic types, in Fifth Album Even Better Than The First Four shock; and that's no mean feat because they're all flawless, even 1984's *Restless Stranger*, which Eitzel loathes. To the hardened Clubber, *Everclear* comes initially as a disappointment. Bruce Kaplan's lush production serving perversely to render the songs less immediate than Tom Mallon's characteristic dry, band-in-a-room sound did - but once you get used to it, it's like seeing the band in colour for the first time, and what colours: the beautiful sleeve depicts its contents perfectly. There's no point pulling out lyrics for you to gawp over, though any randomly-selected couplet would put 99% of writers to shame: you'll just have to go out and acquire their entire back catalogue, starting with this one. That's not some kind of cute hyperbole to end the review with, I really mean it. Go out and get the entire American Music Club back catalogue, not forgetting Eitzel's live solo LP and the awe-inspiring "I'm In Heaven Now" track on the *Human Music* compilation. If you don't love it all, then one of us is a banana. (LN)

VARIOUS *The Sounds Of The City* LP (Columbia)

Think of the worst punk disco ten years ago and multiply it by two - why would anyone want this? I was 10 years old when most of this happened and I certainly wouldn't wanna buy it, though "Where's Captain Kirk?" and "Dog Eat Dog" still sound good. A thinly disguised Chart Hits LP for 1977/8. (KA)

VARIOUS *The Fisheye Sampler* cassette (Fisheye)

The ace new distribution service Fisheye have got this tape together to give you a taste of that they have on offer. Opens with the obvious classic "Summer Babe", and there's loads of weird New Zealand stuff like the squeaky squeaky Dead C and the morbid tones of Peter Jefferies, and Baiter Space who are freaky. Plus there's some brilliant Thinking Fellers *Lovelyville* stuff. You want one of these if you like sounds that you can chew on, and you can get it for £1.60 (or a C90 tape & SAE) from: Paul Wild, Fisheye, 437a High Road Leyton, Leyton, London E10 5EL. Or if you're too timid, just send an SAE for a list. (KA)



PAVEMENT Slanted And Enchanted LP (Big Cat)

In *Ablaze/Land*, a magic and myth-filled place where it never rains, you only leave the house when you want to and leprechauns bring nectar to the door. I'm a relative newcomer to this piece of genius. It first graced my personal stereo last September, a religious experience on a packed number 50 bus, townward bound, a day of misery awaiting me there. From that day, filing cabinets and the stupid people I work with lost their power to annoy, to create despair; now I just look to the corner where my coat is hanging, containing my stereo and *Slanted And Enchanted*, and smile, safe in the knowledge that insanity is close at hand.

There are so many great moments on this LP, anything which on first hearing doesn't sound like one becomes one on the second play... or the fiftieth. I guess I've already played this album more times than any other (take a bow, *Songs To Remember*, *The Smiths*, *Surfer Rosa*, *Reckoning...*) and it's still totally fresh, incredibly exciting. Like when he sings, 'I've got a trigger cut / And I can't pull it back / But if I learn how I'll be coming back today'; the introduction to 'Mr. Y'; the phrase 'soaked it with a dry sponge' or the remarkable false ending to... well, you wouldn't want me to spoil it for you, would you? Moments when your heart stops and the only reaction left is to swoon, to stagger in disbelief. Micheal has a theory that in these post-modern times to gain any sort of fulfillment from art we must grasp the moments, the tiny parts of things which make the whole worth experiencing, worth consuming. On behalf of the defence I call *Yerself Is Steam* and *Slanted And Enchanted*, inspired from the first note to the very last: records to swagger with and sway to. Power and beauty, effortlessly and totally displayed. On 'Here' they even have the audacity to sing 'I was dressed for success / But success it never comes' - one thing is for certain, this group will be massive. Synonyms for deform to the usual address. (GB)

ASPIRISTRA Grip 7" (Fluff)

Fluff is an ace label because it is going to release a Hood record, and also because it might have been named after that band (although I know for a fact that it wasn't). And here's something you didn't know: I had a rabbit called Fluff. It died, too.

Anyway, 'Frances', the B side track, is about 1 1/2 minutes of ungraspable fuzzy pop with a sub-Passing Clouds male vocalist doing a sub-Pastels murmur. The singer is obviously unsure of his abilities, for on the A side he also sounds as if he's recorded his bit whilst wandering, slightly dippily, around the edges of a school hall. Yet, a couple of seconds of post-Mary Chain (1985 version) pleasure can be extracted from this record, despite the band's young, wild and wayward creative attempts. (KA)

(Fluff, 86 Parklands Drive, Loughborough, Leics. LE11 2TD)

THE LAURELS Neck 7" & Burn 7" (Heparin)

Hooray, King Of The Slums are back!!! They've dropped the violin yet somehow recaptured a good proportion of their original, beautiful desperation. Of course, the Laurels are not KOTS and have probably never even heard them, but their strong, whining transatlantic vocals somehow evoke the man Keigher at his best. Mild and catchy are their pop tunes, with ambitious, stretching guitars which conform to no particular clichés that I am aware of. 'Neck' is a dissolving nursery rhyme, and at 2 minutes 9 seconds it's the longest track here, yet it still fleets by. That's a problem for me; as soon as I get used to the fact that one of their songs exists, it's gone again. 'Burn' has a slightly heavier, busier guitar sound with thinner vocals but does pretty much the same stuff, except where it starts to sound like Bogshed. My favourite track is on this second record: 'Fueled' has magnificent guitar bursts and vocals alternately wailing and calmly descriptive. That they live somewhere dead glamorous like Providence and sound like they wanna be here in North England is something I can only consider perverse. But these eight curious little songs are sure to be of interest to *Ablaze!* readers worldwide. (KA)

(PO Box 29447, Providence, RI 02909, USA)

BONGWATER The Big Sell-Out LP (Shimmy Disc)

A group whose first LP was called *Breaking No New Ground* and whose new album opens with a track called 'Ye Olde Backlash' may appear to be simply hedging their bets, apologising before they start. Surely not the way to operate when so many other noble folk are forced to fight over the few grains of unpolluted truth they believe to be hiding somewhere (Ritchie: Cut me, do I not bleed? Billy: Real men cry real tears.) and failing, obviously. But at least trying. As rumours circulate that Kramer's most inspired collaboration to date has, like B.A.L.L. and Butthole Surfers before, finally fallen apart, *The Big Sell-Out* arrives to comfort us in our moment of need but also tantalise us with thoughts of what could (should) have been.

The creaky production which spoils some of *The Power Of Pussy* has been replaced by a consistent, lush sound, perfectly stated for Ann to weave joyful and heart-rending tales around. A group with so much knowledge of, and so much respect for, the past, musically and politically; who always sound totally fresh and, in spite of themselves, totally original. A totally modern pop group (and there aren't many of them!).

'What's Big In England Now?' has Ann narrating a tale of the shoot for the new Bongwater video, complaining about having to do camp again, then somehow ends up with her finding Lenny Kravitz cross-legged, sitting in the loft. When asked the question of the song title, the idiot obviously replies 'Mushy Peas'. Self-deprecation and satire, perfectly executed, when most others fall embarrassingly short. (When Wren attempt similar things, the result is at best unappealing musically, at worst a scrambled mess.) 'Schmoedance' is the Eurythmics if they happened upon any style or actual songs and is glorious; 'Celebrity Compass', previewed in last year's incredible live shows, is sexy and witty as Ann relates her experiences at a Led Zeppelin party.

'Over The Credit Line', though, is quite possibly Bongwater's greatest moment; the futility of belief, money to live and the greatest Velvet Underground parody ('There's a railroad credit line / And I was looking for that fine line') you'll ever hear. 'Holding Hands' sees Ann adopting a deliberately bad German accent to tell the story of a Nazi theatrical performance and is about the weakest thing on here, but the very next track, 'Flute Of Shame' would inspire Julie Andrews to sing along, rude word and all. By the last track, 'Everybody's Talking', a cover of a Nilsson song with a story of suicides added (listen to Crust and see how this idea can fall flat), I've laughed, cried and wallowed in this LP so much the only thing left to do is to play the whole damned thing again. Always inspired, often inspirational, wicked and wise, the last word must be Ann's, from the track 'The Bad Review' on 1990's *Too Much Sleep*. 'But I'm still not sure if it was a pan. The writing was so convoluted and semiotic... why in the hell do I let Kramer do whatever the hell he wants, anyway?' (GB)

THE YOUNG GODS T.V. Sky LP (Play It Again Sam)

The fourth collection of soundscapes from this incredible Swiss group. Now at a point where lesser bands suffer a creative drought, they continue to pour out a relentless molten lava flow of something nearer to High Art than mere songs. Any doubts I'd harboured about their sustained consistency were crushed upon hearing this, and completely blown away by recent shows when halls were saturated with the exhilarating spectrum of noises featured here, each one seeming to have its own gift of life. Enough has been said about the Gods' use of samples. Let's also mention the depth and power of Franz's vocals; the lyrical poetry, capable of capturing moments of heartstopping magic, before scattering them like confetti through the air; the palette of musical experience in use, drawing upon speed metal and hard guitars, but mingling in Doors keyboards and shimmering ghostly effects when a moment of respite is needed. Mindblowing patterns for your ears. (M)

YOUNG GODS T.V. Sky LP (Play It Again Sam)

Why did he have to start singing in English? Seen live, still one of the most compelling bands around, but on this LP not completely convincing. Covering similar ground to previous LPs, occasionally jingoistic ('Gasoline Man') but often nerve wracking ('Our House'), TV Sky is stacked with Americana, and even samples 'LA Woman'. Lacks the special something *L'Eau Rouge* possessed. What a pity - not enough devils. (JG)

SPITFIRE Free Machine EP 12" (Eve)

Catchy enough, but the motorcycles are all parked safely in the head next to the hammer-on conveyor belt. Nice to see a pair of leather trousers with a sharp crease in them. (JG)

LAURA NYRO Eli & 13th Confession and New York Tendaberry LPs (both Columbia)

You shouldn't own a pair of ears without giving this woman a chance. Recently re-issued from 1968 and 1969, but completely relevant. Explorations in joy and misery. (You're supposed to have a verb in every sentence, you know - Ed) If *Eli & 13th Confession* doesn't make you leap out of bed in the mornings, then you don't have a hope. *New York Tendaberry* is almost frightening in its emotional openness. Written and produced by Nyro. Listen. (JG)

NEW FAST AUTOMATIC DAFFODILS All Over My Face 12" (Play It Again Sam)

Not even shouting through a megaphone makes this interesting. The title tells you everything you need to know. (JG)

THE JACK BREWER BAND Harsh World LP (New Alliance); PRAY TV Flux LP (Shock)

These two wouldn't even sit on the turntable, they had so little discipline. (JG)

ROWLAND S.HOWARD / LYDIA LUNCH Shotgun Wedding LP (Triple X)

Ralf Gehrke, Germany's most devoted A.C. Temple fan, likes this record, so I thought I'd give it a try. It begins with two covers that don't appear to merit their existence. I wonder whether this is SW's way of warding off all but the most devoted Lunch/Howard fans, or whether they are merely trying to hide their lack of songwriting ability. The record also ends with a cover called 'Black Jujy' - I haven't heard the original, don't know who it's by, so the fact that they do it fine neither proves nor disproves my theory.

'In My Time Of Dying' - Led Zep's version's so soulful, passionate, laid back to the point of being horizontal. This one's lazy in a different way; a leaning up on one elbow job, trying desperately to look seductive (and failing), when it should be stretched out on its back oblivious to the thoughts of any onlookers. Lydia suffers several textbooks full of social diseases. This isn't her fault; as a mirror for our hypocrisy she's bound to get a bit tainted. Actually, she's one of my heroes, but that fact doesn't allow me to be thrilled by this record, although there are some good guitar bits rising unexpectedly out of the lazy-lazy sub-jazz gloom. (KA)

CHUMBAWAMBA I Never Gave Up 12" (Agit Prop)

The sleeve is a Pet Shop Boys' *Actually* mimic, so you can guess who they're playing to these days. The song's a bit weak here; I only say that cos I know it's so damn punchy live. In the next issue I hope to present the results of an investigation into the Chumbas' Pauline conversion to pop music, and find out how they managed to win the favour of all sorts of normal people, London scum, odd punx, cute kids and nuns. (KA)

CRUEL. FREDERICK. "We. Are. The. Music. We. Play." CD (SST)

Jazz. Butchered. (M)

PUSSY GALORE Corpse Love, The First Year LP (Hut)

Fuck-you attitude monsters to a man, primal in every sense of the word, Pussy Galore created a sound that was like a distillation of the very essence of rock'n'roll; interpreted by a gang of New York alley cats, using the neighbourhood trashcans for instruments. But better. A comprehensive retrospective compilation featuring the ubiquitous 'rare and unreleased material'. A pretty essential package by a band that you shouldn't have let pass you by. (M)

SKEWBALD Grand Union 7" (Dischord)

Ian MacKaye's unreleased post-Minor Threat, pre-Fugazi project finally sees the light of day. The occasion? Dischord's 50th release, and we'd like to take this chance to wish them all the best things in the world because, as I've only just discovered, theirs is one of the greatest labels ever. Physically, this record is a thing. It is pressed on clear vinyl, and the music is only on one side leaving the other perfectly smooth. But what happens when you put the thing on the turntable? A roar of pain, a complete object tearing, a bass heavy yelling mass - the lyrics delivered with such lack of care for the throat from which they are wrenched, as to make very little sense even when coupled with their printed counterparts on the back of the sleeve. To my pansy ears it loses accessibility and tune as it progresses, the ending (more like a second track due to an apparently impromptu stopping and restarting. We have a dilemma about this, Gavin has a theory that if this had been developed it might have merged properly into one song, although he still feels it would sound like two songs.) being a more extreme case of what went on at the start. This song is without the clarity and strength of MacKaye's subsequent material and less aesthetically pleasing than his previous band. Less than MT, less than Fugazi; I guess this pleases the dedicated and merely annoys the rest of us, their neighbours. (KA)

CITIZEN FISH Wider Than A Postcard LP (Bluurg)

Don't laugh at me - I kinda like this stuff. Maybe there's crustiness lurking in the holes in my clothes, too scared to come out... but this sort of reversion to stereotypes and pigeonholes is exactly what Citizen Fish are not about. So, whadda they sound like? To be honest, most of this is very Culture Shock-y, apart from when they parody (at least I think it's parody) funk, metal and goth styles. But whenever that good ol' skanky guitar sound comes back, I feel like it's been there forever.

Lyrical CF are dead sincere. Their songs are vehicles for communication, for questioning, for raging protest. It is trendy to laugh at people who sweat away in this manner, putting the sharing of their beliefs before aesthetic development; but I admire this kind of priority, although it doesn't excite me too much.

When I was 15 I saw Subhumanz. It was in Scarborough. I bumped into Dick outside and he offered me some of his chips. The title of this record reflects a preoccupation with the sea(side): 'Let's get back on the beaches - wider than a postcard - and run straight into the sea - longer than a holiday...'; 'and the girl is facing the wrong way into the camera cos she just turned round and saw the sewage pipe and drunken tourists and dead fish in rotting nets and police cars and the immobile grey surf where the tide stops... and no bathing' in 6 different languages...

Citizen Fish re-appropriate the messages of postcards and lay the blueprint for something healthier.

Write to Bluurg at 2, Victoria Terrace, Melksham, Wilts. SN12 6NA with an SAE for their very reasonably priced list of records, tapes, CDs, shirts and other stuff. (KA)



BEAT HAPPENING *Sea Hunt 7"* (Bijopiter/K)
The Pastels like these but I'm afraid, again, that it just doesn't turn me on. The very deep, Jim Morrison type singing and the unhectic, gently acoustic sounding guitars create something too simple for me to appreciate. The happy song has sweet backing vocals and the sad song sounds a bit sad, but that's all I can say really. For those with purer hearts? (KA)
(Bijopiter, 2 Wentworth Rd, Hertford, Herts SG13 8JP)

VARIOUS 7" (Stark)
Here's a four track 7" which gives an idea of things going on down Harlow, Essex way a while back. The **Checkists** "Filing Down Your Teeth" is, shockingly, mid-period Cabaret Voltaire with a bit of Tools You Can Trust grunting here and there. They're only trying to put the shits up you about going to the dentist so just ignore them, kids. **Tuesday Painters** do respectable, pretty pop with tulips of fine female cooing and ohhhh, so I'm not complaining. The **Indestructible Beat** produce a smug, jolly, unintentionally folksy and otherwise bland and far too lengthy song thing that sounds uncannily like Eurythmics' "I Wanna Be Right By Your Side" or whatever it was called. And **Pregnant Neck** provide the serious weirdness on this record with "Sucking On Dead Skin". This is said to be their last recording before guitarist Lee's tragic (for us, if not him) suicide. It's the imps from the lower woodland dancing crookedly round a toadstool, jammering a little tune all the while. At the end they notice the hogs are watching, so they stop for a chat. (KA)
(Stark, 12 Rye Hill Rd, Harlow, Essex)

BURNOUT debut 7" (Drag City)
A hot energetic beastie, this. I really think Burnout might just live up to their name. It does sound a bit like early Stone Roses, but as if they'd listened to the Fall a bit more, and got their singer to adopt unseemly Johnny Rottenese. Unfortunately this is only one side of the record, and only one side of Burnout. The other is even tougher, heavier and punkier, with, oh my god, gang-of-lads "ohhh-ohhh" backing vocals. If this was my cup of tea, it seems to have become too cold to drink. (KA)
(Drag City, PO Box 476867, Chicago, IL 60647)

NOMEANSNO *0+2=1 LP* (Alternative Tentacles)
Oh fuck off. I know, more heresy, but TODAY, Nomeansno really get on my tits. Their worldview, so full of terror, hatred and disgust, I have no time for. Sometimes they can be funny, sometimes they seem to make sense ("If every fourth animal in the world is a beetle, perhaps every fourth person is a DUMB FUCK"), but at other times, well... ("Unday, Noneday, Useday, Buttugly, Whoresday, Painday, SPLATTERSDAY," from "Everyday I Start To Ooze"). I can only assume that these sentiments spring from a great well of self-disgust. The music is still taut, bludgeoning, heavy rock and not much fun; it strikes me as more or less functionally enslaved to their nihilism. Also I hate the way that, despite all this negativity, they always sound so hideously sure of themselves. I don't understand them; I want to, but wisdom isn't forthcoming. (KA)

THE FRANK AND WALTERS *Happy Busman 7"* (Setanta)

Curious Cork-core (ha! made that one up myself, I did. NME job perhaps? Only kidding. Haven't got the time or the inclination.) with all the charm of that lovely city. Is that patronising? How do you patronise a band who sing about a happy bus driver who loves all his passengers? I'm not usually a sucker for this kind of thing, but this one gets me by dint of some neat twists of tune, an ace guitar which sounds incongruously like Sonic Youth and the wonderful lyric "Smile / Smile all the time / Smile all your life / Don't ever die", which would ooze horribly in many people's hands, but not theirs. (LN)

CONSOLIDATED *Friendly Fascism LP* (Network) *Unity Of Oppression 12"* (Network)

Once upon a not very distant time I used to hate blatantly polemic stuff; believing an insidious, impressionistic approach to be more politically effective in these sophisticated and mediated days where everybody already thinks they know every side of every argument. I was wrong. Consolidated are a slap in the face not just for rap (which, with the important and very large exception of Public Enemy, has been pretty much devoid of hardline political comment. Plenty of concerned liberals, yes) but for all of us. If you buy one non-rock record a year, make it the LFO one. If you buy two, get *Friendly Fascism* as well. And while you're at it, get rid of those bloody stupid Ride LPs. (LN)

TOASTED HERETIC *Galway And Los Angeles 12"* (Liquid), *Another Day, Another Riot MC* (Liquid)

Toasted Heretic vocalist Julian Gough has a voice you'll either love or hate - most people of my acquaintance seem to opt for the latter, words like "smug" and "mimsy" cropping up repeatedly; but me, I love it. I was turned onto the Heretic by a tape of two excellent LPs of demos which some thoughtful member of the public sent us: here's hoping lots of those songs appear on vinyl in the future, but in the meantime we've got "Galway And Los Angeles", a song about exchanging a lustful glance with Sinead O'Connor at a T.V. station, and as superbly-crafted a lyric as you'll hear anywhere. I'm no Costello-bore, either. Just hear it. The music's great, too: an unlikely hotch-potch of tacky electronic rhythm, sporadic bursts of twiddly lead guitar and air-raid sirens. "Another Day, Another Riot" is sadly nowhere near as good, being too flimsy a musical vehicle for Gough's expansive personality. It does, however, contain the verse: "How can you continue to / Be human when your job includes / Bugging Freddie Mercury's funeral / Sobbing run as interviews", which is great, if a little Roger Wooddis. (LN)

REVENGE OF THE CARROTS *Rustig! 7"* (Konkurrel)

Reminiscent of The Ex but much less subtle than that band's recent output. I don't know what to say about stuff like this really: I mean, rather *Revenge Of The Carrots* than *bleeding Revolver* any day, but I won't be listening to this again because it completely fails to move me in any way. The last track might appeal to former fans of Bastard Kestrel. Both of you. (LN)

(£2 to Postbus 14598, 1001 LB Amsterdam, Holland)

PEARL JAM *Ten LP* (Epic)

This band are so lucky. Fancy releasing an album just when the anally-retentive music press are aching to jump on somebody and proclaim them the next Nirvana (Question: Why? Do you think people will respect you if you lie to them? Listen, I do a bit of Nirvana myself now and again, but one is quite enough thank you very much.), and being clutched to the collective bosom like a long-lost friend for this! Fortunately, here at *Ablaze!* we still listen with our ears; this album is truly dreadful. The first time I heard the opening track 'Once' I spat tea all over my living room. Tired, nay completely knackered, guitar work (it's even more work for me, let me tell you) and one of those histrionic heavy rock vocalists who would be equally at home in a band called Love Truncheon or something and would normally, quite properly, just be ridiculed. Look to America by all means, there's a lot of really great stuff there; but look to Pavement, Mercury Rev and Shudder To Think, not this drivel. If Whitesnake covered this album, two things would be immediately apparent: 1. No-one would dare pretend to be shocked. 2. It would sound better. (GB)

LAST PARTY *Creature Lake 7"* (Bilberry)

In 1988, when Last Party released the classic LP *Porky's Range* I really loved this band; nothing else came near my stereo for months. Understand my excitement then, when this dropped through our letterbox, especially as I had long since presumed Last Party had been thrown onto the European Unsuccessful Band Mountain. I was even more relieved to find four more years of obscurity had not changed the band's attitude. So what do you get? 'Pat Minus Jack' is a broody and moody little thing with some great screaming. 'Creature Lake' itself has the classic Last Party elements, arrogance and wit wrapped up in a spiky tune; but weirdest of all, 'Bruce Lee Was So Fit It Killed Him', which sounds like Frank Sinatra, Dusty Springfield and a bontempi organ trapped in a telephone box, as well as being just about the only record I've ever liked with whistling on. 'Even The Creatures That Live In The Lake Have Their Heads Screwed On'. Welcome back. (GB)

MARIA ANGELICA *Stroboscopic Cherries LP* (DGK)

From Brazil, I thought when this arrived that Maria might have been one of the four naked women on the cover, but Maria Angelica is a band and the four women on the cover are not in it. Sometimes pub rock, sometimes sub-Housemartins harmonising, sometimes Television Personalities rip-off, often within the same song, as well as lyrics evoking images of 'Flames Of Fire', 'The Still Waters Of Deceit' and 'The Soiled Underpant Of Middle Class Mores'. (GB)

GALLON DRUNK *Some Fools Mess 12"* (Clawfoot)

'Some Fools Mess' is not quite the swampy monster it thinks it is, it's a bit too clean for that, but nevertheless it rattles along unselfconsciously, something 'May The Earth Open Here' can't do, too aware that it's basically a crap Birthday Party rip-off. 'Rolling Time' (like 'May The Earth Open Here', recorded in 1988) has more of the dirtiness the A side aspires to, but the song's not quite up to it. (GB)

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THE LEAVING TRAINS *The Lump In My Forehead LP* (SST)

I've told myself that they're harmless (and I have to say that the world is in need of their Bob Hope death hymn) but you see there's this bloke in the band and he "launches personal affronts at women (who make you feel like a piece of shit)" (quote from press release). Well, I don't like to pass conjecture; but if he's not too popular with the ladies *no wonder*. Perhaps it's the mauve hair ribbon, cheap baubles and crudely daubed cosmetics that are the problem; because if the cod transvestism, as featured in the band photo, is indicative of how he views womankind then I think he may have to settle for a "bachelor lifestyle". *"She's got big tits/ She's got red lips/ I want to touch her/ I want to fuck her/ Women are evil, lead you down the path to death and destruction/ Women are evil, never give you nothing"*. (From "Women Are Evil") Oh dear. Irony in overdrive? Perhaps - but I can't take any chances. So, Mr. Falling James, if you're reading this, I'm a woman and I'll give you something - yep, a bad record review - and if women won't fuck you then all I can suggest is that you go fuck yourself. (JW)

DHARMA BUMS *Bliss LP* (Frontier)

Look Karren, this was hanging around even when I shared a house with you. I don't wish to upset you, but aside from being old and crap it's scratched as well, and it jumps loads, so I think I should warn you that it's highly unlikely you'll get more than a quid down Gerol's for it. (JW)

NOFX *Liberal Animation LP* (Epitaph)

Y'know the routine. It's mericce boys in combats and Converse, shouting loud and playing fast. They were doing just fine, having duly entertained me with a song concerning the *Weltschmerz* of those afflicted with crabs, until I came across their charming punker ditty "On The Rag" - *"It's that time of the month again, you're bitching/ Stop yelling at me/ I know you've got to plug yourself up but why take it out on me/ Just leave me alone, stop yelling at me/ Leave me alone when it's your time to bleed"*. O.K. I hope you girls got that and REMEMBER you can't wash your hair, prepare food or associate with the Elders in the village because you're UNCLEAN! D'YOU HEAR ME - UNCLEAN!! (JW)

JOHN TRUBEE & THE UGLY JANITORS OF AMERICA *Naked Teenage Girls In Outer Space LP* (Restless)

Serious, heavy-duty LOSERVILLE here. John Trubee "creates" cod jazz doodlings and has a nine minute epic entitled "Leper In The Shadows" which catalogues and castigates the filth of the world. So if "you're the vacuous girls who snubbed me years ago in high school" or "you're the glamorous girls who only ball guys with lobotomies" then it's all your fault. One feel of your gusset and John's life could have been so different. And cheap as it may be this review cannot omit to mention the fact that on this record Gerry Fialka is credited as playing with his knob. (JW)
(Yeah, but some of his stuff is ace - see future Abaze! flexi hit - Ed.)

SANDKINGS *Shake Your Head 12"* (London)

It transpires that this lot are from the Midlands, which is really sad because if you're going to blatantly erm... emulate another band you could at least try finding one from a different city, country or (best of all) continent. Yes, it's The Wonder Stuff. minus the zany clobber, the "worrabunchalads" 46 strong all-male road crew, the, ahem... comedian and most importantly the ubiquitous "Fiddly". In fact, the only good thing about this record is the massive technicolor photograph of Sammy Davies Jr. on the cover, which I intend to cut out and turn into a greetings card with which to impress a charming American boy I know who is Sammy's most fervent devotee. (JW)

VIOLET TOWN *Seventh Veil 12"* (Shock)

There's a really good film called *The Seventh Veil*. It's got James Mason as this pianist's psychotic guardian, and if she doesn't practice enough then he slams the piano lid down onto her fingers or whips her or something. So she for obvious reasons falls in love with him. Progressive, I call it. Now if James Mason had been present this evening I'd have let him do the same to me. Anything really to distract me from this godawful record. (JW)

PEGBOY *Strong Reaction LP* (1/4 Stick)

Well they've got a World H.Q. which is impressive and the back cover has some cool photos of an exploding radio but the lyrical content is as lame as any Toto track. (*"If I could be a superstar/ Custom plane, fancy car/ I'd get away, would go far"*) This twoness is excusable in Daniel Johnston - he's mentally ill but you, Pegboy, are big, strong healthy boys. Oh well, let's just say that the coupling of Pegboy and Southern Studios was not exactly a meeting of great minds. (JW)

(This remark refers purely & simply to the fact that Southern foolishly refused to distribute one of the fab pop singles on Justine's Hemiola label and, needless to say, the sentiment is not shared by the rest of the Abaze! staff. Ed)

DAWSON *How To Follow So That Others Will Willingly Lead (Oh My Godley And Creme Cheese) LP* (Gruff Wit)

They sell their records cheap, they give away politically correct broadsheets. They are good and true folks and I'm told they'd split up. So I shan't speak ill of the dead; in fact I haven't got anything derogatory whatsoever to say about them and to be honest that leaves me flummoxed. (JW)

DRIVE *Outbreak LP* (First Strike)

They have the best thank you list I've ever seen on a record sleeve, thanking everyone from Darts (the game and the band) to Simon Groom, from Victor Kiam to Blake's 7. They even thank someone who told me a very scurrilous tale concerning a "Jules Verne" demo tape and a Boo Radleys guitarist so, Martin, if you don't want worldwide exposure courtesy of these pages, then I believe you would be wise to take out lifetime subscriptions for yourself and all your friends and family forthwith. Okay? (JW)

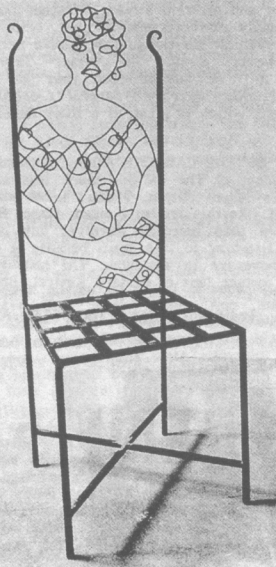
HOTHREAD - *It's Epic 12"* (O.R.B.)

Aw Karren, can I stop now, seeing as Cagney & Lacey's on T.V.? (JW)

HIGH BACK CHAIRS *Of Two Minds LP* (Dischord)

OK! OK! I thought Shudder To Think had broken the Dischord mould - but these? Now maybe I don't know my history (I know, I don't), but the idea of such blatant pop from that once blatant hardcore label just *freaks* me. Dischord is one of my favourite labels in the world, even though I've only got about ten of their releases, and HBC are gonna get the benefit of my loyalty ("Dischord is good/Fugazi, Shudder To Think/Nation Of Ulysses, Autoclave" as Gavin's chant goes). THEIR TUNES, though, WHERE THE FUCK DID THEY GET ALL THOSE TUNES? They've stolen some of the (so naughtily) most hard-hitting pop moments in the last 10 years or so and mixed them all together in their strange songs. There's a bit of an old rock toon that I'm sure goes "Gimme all yr loving", and that's what they use at the start of "Take Away", and it still sounds great. They have mined the Teardrops/Inspirals seam very heavily (don't tell me they haven't heard "When I Dream") Listen to "Wild!", plus there are some severe Beatalic harmonies scattered around, and even some Squeeze (on "Cannonfodder"), blended with those right strapping basslines. Moments of wondrousness, like the intro to "Swear", are superseded by ones of utter blandness, like the chorus of "Swear".

And - another important thing you need to know about High Back Chairs - they're so happy. The songs are overflowing with optimism, even when they're pissed off. They'd better come over here and tell me about it, and they'd better not say they don't know what I mean about those tunes... (KA)



MOONFLOWERS *Hash Smits LP* (Pop God)

There's a horrible cheesy organ sound on this record which reminds me of the horrible Inspirial Carpets. Apart from that this record is pretty good although I wouldn't go as far as to buy it or anything. There's a lot of wah-wah pedals employed to make a dancey, hippy sort of sound with twiddly Hendrix guitar bits and lots of shouting terrible lyrics like *"We dig your earth - dig it"* and *"I am so in love with you"*. At the end of side one there's an excellent reggae/dub episode without any singing which is probably the best bit on the LP. It's a refreshingly unpretentious record in these four times. (SM)

DAS DAMEN *Entertaining Friends LP* (City Slang)

This is a live album, and never having heard Das Damen before I was pleasantly surprised. They've got good songtites (*"Gray Isn't Black"*, *"Reverse Hits Tomorrow"*), nice heavy guitar sound and best of all their name written in psychedelic lettering on their drum kit, like Deep Purple or something. They sound a bit like Dinosaur Jr, only better. Rocking stuff. (SM)

THE GOD MACHINE *Purity EP 12"* (Eve)

Nobody believes me when I say this, but "Home" reminds me of Band Of Susans. I think it's in the vocals, the shouty delivery, but I hope that neither BOS nor the Godies are offended by this comparison, cos I like both of them. Onto "The Blind Man", which our Gav describes as "Wankers! Great big buckets full of wankers!" (translation: this is heavy metal). In fact it's fairly inoffensive, arty heavy metal, and I'm sure they have long hair and I'm sure they do masturbate, but there's nothing wrong with that. So I'm gonna interview them next time and find out what "Home" is all about. "Purity" is the delicate wispy one and it's OK too. (KA)

POPPI UK *Sunseekers LP* (Community 3 Int.)

More ace tunes from these Dutch kids, but I have to complain that they have changed hardly at all over their last several wrekids; it's the same insistent bass, same chirpily singing guitar, same vocal style and song structures. Good, but I've heard it before: at least this band are repeating *themselves* and not someone else. (KA)

THE PASTELS *Speeding Motorcycle 12"* (Paperhouse)

Which do I like best, the side with one song on it, or the side with 3 songs on it? I like the side with 3 songs on it! Partly because I don't like Daniel's "Speeding Motorcycle" as a song very much, cos it's too drippy and kinda christmassy (the different mix on the other side is a little more upbeat and dringly) but mainly because the other two songs are very special. "Speedway Star" has an smashing orangey bit in the middle, where everything goes "oooh", and "4th Bend" has Stephen fagorning *"I'm standing on the 4th bend with all my friends"* over and over, until everything goes slightly out of coherence and disappears. It's all about watching the motorbike races too. (KA)

THE ONLY ONES *Another Girl - Another Planet 12"* (Columbia)

You're laughing, aren't you? You think we're doing a *Spiral Scratch*, don't you? But they really have released this, on "special red vinyl", and backed it with the Psychedelic Furs' "Pretty In Pink". It's a trailer for both *The Best Of The Only Ones* and *The Sound Of The Suburbs* (Altered Images! Ian Dury! Martha And The Muffins! The Undertones! etc), and since *somebody* has to make their contribution to the upkeep of the cars and houses of the various incarnations of The Man this week, it's clearly the turn of Those People Who Wish To Remain In A New Wave Disco For The Rest Of Their Lives. Serves them right, I say. (KA)

VARIOUS *The Unknown 13 MC* (Rain Tapes)

Twenty six songs by bands from all over the world and several from Wales, linked only by the fact that hardly anyone has ever heard of them. I expected it to be dreadful, instead I found quite a lot of stong punky stuff, a couple of tunes stolen off Bob Mould's *Workbook LP*, and a rap or two by a Californian female combo called F Defective. I couldn't pinpoint any other band names without concentrating really hard, because there's so many of them and nearly all have male vocals, but I'd actually recommend this, especially to people who think Mega City 4 are good. See how we care about your education. (KA)
(Rain Tapes c/o Julian, 10 Maes Y Dre, Ruthin, Clwyd LL15 1DB.)

MOE TUCKER *I Spent A Week There The Other Night LP* (New Rose)

Surefire perfect ten. Healing essence of rock'n'roll. Do you know about Moe Tucker? Like Reed and Cale, she means more to me with each new piece of work. They all inherit the best marks of ye Velvet Underground; realism, passion, musicality. This LP has famed reunion of that group. But first, recall last classic Moe, *Life In Exile After Abdication*. This is as good! Working momma's punk blues, all the gathering storms, failing horizons, leaking taps and soft tears. Bad food, bad TV, cold bed, and no cash (for no record date, remember, life is cruel). Moe drums not but plays guitar now, but of course the drums here are Tuckeresque too. Sprightly, rubbery guitar recalls good times, simpler times, the joy of motoring, being choked on sunlight. (And Then) He Kissed Me' with Cale viola is a naked moment. 'Blue, All The Way To Canada' is a quiet but scorching paean to Amerindian values. Real, sharp lyrics. Burst fruit energy. The last track, 'I'm Not', the one with all four of our black riders, I find intensely sorrowful, the journey within of a caged bear. Do listen. Rock'n'roll is sometimes this good. Soul, wit, compassion. Alive, today, I'm sticking with Moe. (TT)

VARIOUS ARTISTS *Dangerhouse Volume One LP* (Frontier)

This is a compilation of singles released from 1977 to 1979 on the Los Angeles Dangerhouse label. As you might expect it's pretty punk rock stuff. *"Schools and factories make me sick"* claims Black Randy who, it is claimed in the sleeve notes, "wrote lyrics in PCP/alcoholic/diabetic stupors which mirrored the despair of the human condition in a way that deserved immortality" which might be going a bit far. It's all a nice mixture of nihilism and naivety with guitar sounds that recall nothing so much as seminal Birkenhead Oi outfit Instant Agony. You can imagine the various bands had an ace time recording these songs and they're fun to listen to as well, containing a humour lacking from the current U.S. punk scene. Best track is "Disneyland" by The Eyes which has a good tune and a brilliantly sneering vocal. (SM)

VARIOUS ARTISTS *Wild And Crazy Noise Merchants - Waste Of The 1 In 12 Club Vol 9/10 DLP* (1 in 12)

Most of this is punk-by-numbers with little individuality. There are exceptions though - the amazing Godorrhoea begin the album with four frenzied and incomprehensible thrashes, there's Chumbawamba sounding like Madness and Northern Ireland's Pink Turds In Space do an excellent version of "Teenage Kicks". There's a couple of folk tunes and lots of nondescript hardcore by bands I've never heard of. It comes with a nice booklet, in case you're interested. (SM)

VARIOUS ARTISTS *Black Out LP* (Black)

This is billed as the best of Black records, which leads me to wonder what the worst must sound like. It features Crazyhead, The Stone Roses, The Dream and the Pleasureheads and it's absolutely shit. (SM)



VARIOUS *Something Weird* LP (Ugly Music)

A thoughtfully put together compilation of totally obscure kind of, erm, garage music of varying genres, for want of a better phrase. Nice packaging - lots of tacky B movie stills are featured on the sleeve, presumably linking in with the admittedly cool samples that are littered between the actual tracks, taken from the kind of films I can imagine the Cramps poring over. But is it all meant to enhance or detract from the music? After all that's what we're here for and no matter how neat this record may seem, the songs themselves are too far gone into second rate shoddiness to ever be saved. Which makes it all seem a bit of a waste. (M)

DIE KREUZEN *Cement* LP (Touch and Go)

Very sad. Die Kreuzen have long been hovering hopefully around the perimeters of critical acceptance but were never quite allowed into the circle of revered noise merchants. This looks like their shot at the big one. Butch Vig, the name whose production has hit the jackpot for Nirvana and Smashing Pumpkins, is roped in. Their old identity seems to have been discarded: the vocals, normally high pitched, have been adapted to create a style which strays unsteadily through Soundgarden territory before landing in doggy metal crossover country, with the music not far behind. Dammit, I can't believe that for all this time they've been searching for a sound like this to call their spiritual home. And if they have, then let me be the first to tell them that Love/Hate and co. do it better and always will. (M)

THE UNDEAD *Dawn Of The Undead* LP (Shagpile)

The sleeve notes said it all. The Undead feature main man Bobby Steele, "The Misfits' one time guitar hero". What more do you need to know? I even considered reviewing this without bothering to listen to it until my conscience pricked and I decided that this would have been just a tad unprofessional. (Not that I get paid, you understand.) So I listened to it and of course I'd been right all along: Bobby Steele was a one time Misfit. Getting kicked out by Glenn Danzig added little, if any, sophistication to his style. (M)

ANASTASIA SCREAMED *Moontime* LP (Roughneck)

The sleeve captures a moment in time before the West was won, a scene of a white settler and a red indian seated by a campfire together. The music is a descendant of the '83 guitar wave (REM, Miracle Legion etc). It's pleasant enough, but they've underestimated the role of a good tune. Yeah, it's rootsy American heritage time, but then I'm a Leeds 6 kid and this stirs nothing within me. M62, not Route 66. (M)

THERAPY *Pleasure Death* LP (Wiiija)

As I never tire of telling people, I saw Big Black first time around and the Buttholes the second time: hence I feel more than adequately qualified to announce that if you think Therapy?, who appear to attempt to combine the two, come anywhere near up to scratch then you seriously need to rethink your standards. (M)

MERCURY REV *Car Wash Hair* CD Single (Mint Films)

50.01 minutes precisely of groovily package d (Bardot in thigh high boots anyone?) unleashed Rev. "Car Wash Hair" continues the intergalactic "to boldly go where no man has gone before" approach of their rather special debut LP. And then it really gets weird. Strange demo versions follow: feedback, loops, dialogue, a violin on lead guitar (if you get me) culminating in an EPIC 30 minute collage of noises which sounds like a poltergeist has made its home in your sound system. With excerpts of a band member undergoing psychotherapy (cue drawl: "I can tell you... that picture's got a headache.") woven into all of this, how can you go wrong? (M)

KILLJOY *Killjoy* CD EP (Idol Worship Records)

There's something about this which almost, just almost, tempts me to muse that under much more favourable circumstances, Boston's Killjoy could nearly aspire to be an American Echo and the Bunbunymen. At times the vocals are tinged with a melancholy faintly reminiscent of old Mac, until the moment is eradicated by the overpowering doses of James-ness in the production. Not a chance, really. (M)

MADNESS *Divine Madness* LP (Virgin)

They'll keep repackaging these singles until you bastards stop buying them you know, but I won't complain too much; rather this than The Jam or The Beat any day of the week. I can't (alright I haven't really tried to) listen to this without thinking of a particularly unpleasant person I was at school with who was Madness mad, and this was such a large part of eighties 'youth culture', that's (for most people) probably the point. If this reminds you of happier times in the past or you genuinely have never heard many of these songs before then buy the bloody thing. I really don't mind; just don't come around here in one of those hats doing that stupid dance. (GB)

THE HUNGRY *I Second Step* EP (Nursery)

Notable only for the inclusion of "Two Steps Forward", a cover of a song credited to REM that even REM haven't even heard of, surely. Obviously The Hungry I are in the fanclub and receive free flexis at Christmas. Whatever - they slaughter the song. Their own apid compositions fare even worse beneath a deluge of impassioned vocals, pointless harmonies and twee twiddly guitar. All strangely akin to Deacon Blue and the like. Soul without a soul, you know the kind of thing. (M)

LIZARD WHIP *Five Lashes* CD EP (Shagpile)

One wonders how the perpetrators of this particularly cringeable form of Heavy Metal keep their faces straight long enough to ever seriously nurture the seedlings of these infantile ideas, pursue them into a recording studio, and finally have the nerve to inflict them upon a passing innocent such as myself. But somehow they've done it. An achievement, truly. (M)

SOME PARADISE *Goodbye Ruth* 12" EP (Some Paradise)

According to the press release, scrawled by our beloved Todmorden postman Mark Fields, Some Paradise are a new Tod band, ex-Victory Mansions, and this debut EP is already a Peel fave: I've only played side one but already I can tell that "What Is The Sense" is an immediate hit, in a kind of Weddoes raging-against-her-girlfriend vein. "Goodbye Ruth" seems to be an angry song about someone getting the sack from a factory job. "Alizon" has an awful refrain of "Which girl are you? Which girl are you?"; I hate songs that are given girls' names - what right do these men have, to pick a woman and write about her? It's all so dull and stupid and ugly. The final track poses the question "Who's your favourite cat?" in a strangely insistent manner. The cover features a cartoon line drawing of a woman's head. The woman is wearing a blindfold. Why is she wearing a blindfold? This is quite worrying. Maybe she's being taken to one of their gigs? Perhaps someone would be kind enough to let me know. (KA)

(Contact Some Paradise at 16 Well St, Todmorden, Lancs. OL14 6LW.)

HAIR AND SKIN TRADING COMPANY *Ground Zero* EP 12" (Situation Two)

Mmmm, quite a boppy little deal. Soul-less, pointless vocals; obviously nobody has told them that it's not cool just to shout. I suggest that they either try, or get someone who can put something beyond just blunt rhythm into the throat output. But then, I don't understand this 50th generation rock disco anyway, we've already had Sique Sique Sputnik... It's nuthin' but pretentious boppy bollocks from boring, bearded, drug-addled old Loop men. (KA)

DIM STARS *EP* (Paperhouse)

Anyone coined a term for self-indulgent, incestuous, inscency rock from Nu York, yet? Well, I think I should: (ahem) Nobcore. This is the 50th piece of Nobcore we've been sent and it features Thurston Moore & Steve Shelley & Richard Hell, it says here, and guess what? It's bollix. (KA)

BOO RADLEYS *Boo Up!* EP 12" (Rough Trade)

Yick. Uk. I'm going to concentrate on this mop music, I really am going to try and see what all the stupid boys like about it. Is it the texture, the sidewaysness of the tunes, is it the heavily over-subscribed genre they're aiming at, or is it just something good to chew on? I'll tell you what I can hear: some Dinosaur Jr guitars, some Sonic Youth (Daydream era) guitars, some *Isn't Anything* warp factor, and lots of wanna-be Ian Masters vocals. I'm sorry to be so unempathetic, it's not through lack of effort; and I really did want to like it. I wanted it to live up to the gorgeous colours of the paintings on the sleeve. However, once more I have to wheel out the tired old "what's the point?" verdict. (KA)

HONEY TONGUE *Nude Nudes* LP (Playtime)

Tiptoeing into unknown territory is always an apprehension-causing thing. I had a vague notion of what to expect and this actually coincided with my imagination - only more so. Josephine's cello playing has always given me goose bumps, so I figured she was a serious musician and that playing cool bass with the Breeders and Ultra Vivid Scene wasn't exactly stretching her abilities. *Nude Nudes* is an album out there, bravely and unashamedly on its own. Marine Girls, P.J. Harvey, Devils Welding Semitars - there is no real comparison (Margaret Fielder of Moonshake oddly comes closest). On first hearing I was expecting some crashing guitar to blast in: this didn't happen, I was disappointed. Then I thought - hang on, this is exactly how it should be, my ears are currently becoming conditioned to expect bursts of loud guitar as the norm and I don't like that. This is the most personal and strangely compelling album I've heard for ages. Life and love at a very calm pace. A telephone that won't ring, flowers on every birthday, perfect letters and talking 'til 5am. 'Bedtime Story' and 'On Thursdays' do me in. An eloquently structured album to snuggle up to and one to create a vast breathing space for - skin warm and smooth. (SW)

VARIOUS ARTISTS *Ingrowing Toejam* LP (Toejam)

I was really having a bad day until I listened to this. Things were crappy and I wasn't really looking forward to reviewing a compilation of people I'd never heard. We all make mistakes. This is a gem, to be savoured and treasured forever. Ranging from fast to nearly easy listening and back again, everything is just as good as everything else (BBMF's "ER Pinkus" is a bit of a standout though). Just buy this record, buy all other Toejam records, go to see any of these bands and cheer yourself up. (Cue subliminal advert) BUYBUYBUYBUYBUYBUYBUYBUYBUYBUY... (R)

FURNITURE *The Wrong People* LP (Stiff, I think);

Food, Sex And Paranoia LP (Arista, probably)

Not strictly allowed on the reviews pages because one of these was out in '86 and the other in '89; nobody, as far as I know, is about to re-release them and nobody was good enough to (tee hee) furnish us with copies of the things (nobody, that is, except Terry from the Outer Hebrides); but some things have to be said, so I'm going to stuff it into the machine anyway and hope Karren doesn't notice. Quite simply, brilliant stuff. If you've any kind of soft spot for Scott Walker or the sublime Associates (and if not, you haven't lived, child) you'll love the voice. Pretty much whatever your bag you'll love something in the music as it takes in so many styles, from simple pop through broody ballads, epic production numbers, reggae basslines, flamenco guitars, jazz piano - and I swear, "Answer The Door" sounds like *Christian Death*. I hope to be interviewing the ex-Furniture people (they've split up now and taken dodgy day-jobs) for the next *Ablaze!*; though I'm not quite sure what their music has to do with the progressive (oh yes!) outlook of the magazine, except that it doesn't sound like anyone else's. The lyrics are excellent, full of resonant little observations about love and life and stuff; and the tunes and arrangements immaculate. Not your usual *Ablaze!* reader's diet, perhaps, but a spot of genre-bending never did anyone any harm. Have you heard early Roxy Music stuff? You should, as loud as possible. Furniture, for all the sonic and sartorial dissimilarity, were an eighties equivalent in their fusion of the avant garde and disparate conventional styles to produce a classy, intelligent pop music with no discernable obligation to its own, or any other, etc. (LN)

METAL MONKEY MACHINE *Thrashing The Funk Out Of Our Souls* MLP (Psi)

This lot alone allowed one of my bands to use their P.A. so I'm tempted to give them a good review but unfortunately impartiality reigns amongst *Ablaze!* contributors so I have to say that this record is quite disappointing. I'd heard comparisons to Funkadelic, which sounded promising, but the reality is sadly different. It's all very "rock 'n' roll" and dated sounding and you get the impression that they'd be very dull live. (SM)

AFRICAN HEAD CHARGE *Pride And Joy* LP (On-U)

Now this is really excellent stuff. African Head Charge are always brilliant live and this is a live album, with all those reverberating druggy drum sounds and heavy bass lines. This music is unclassifiable - it isn't reggae, it isn't dance music, it's a weird hybrid that makes your soul cry out with happiness. You get Albert Einstein talking in a querulous voice about language being an "instrument of reason in the true sense of the word", you get incomprehensible gibberish from band leader 'Jojo!' about "the power for I", it's all great stuff except for the last track which is very strange and a bit crap. (SM)

CARCASS *Necroticism - Descanting the Insalubrious* LP (Earache)

The main attraction in Carcass for me is the lyrics which are really funny, utilising obscure medical terms. The music all sounds like Napalm Death or any other such band: it comes across well when played loud though. Gastro-idipathology at its finest. (SM)

SLOVENLY *Drive It Home, Abbernathy* 7" (Ajax)

Karren called this 'Fucked-up Firehose' to which I would add the question 'What If Yeah Yeah Noh Had Come From Chicago?'. Brilliantly lopsided vocal, especially on 'Seeking Equilibrium', but perversely the last track (of four), 'Sixth Fingerless', a wonderfully disorganised instrumental, is even better. (GB)

THE LEAVING TRAINS *Loser Illusion Pt.0* 10" (SST)

Some things are so bad, so desperate, that you just can't bear thinking about them. Fortunately my friend Mozart is here to lend a shoulder. So, what about it Wolfie?

WAM: I declinah that music! (GB)

ALABAMA KIDS *Earthman Supersmell* LP (Schemer)

On first listen this sounds like one in a long line of albums by American bands that just couldn't have been done anywhere but the US of A, but Alabama Kids come from Eindhoven, Holland. Prejudices aside, this is brilliant. Side two has a song ("The Ladder") where their singer sings "S'got got got thumbs" or something. Music to stand around and wave your head aimlessly to. (R)

THE FISH JOHN WEST REJECT *Fin* 12" (Shock)

The press release hails these as "Australia's answer to The Wonder Stuff" and they're right. Hip hip hooray! Yes, it's that annoying, irritating, clichéd, chirpy, humorous singalong and I'm going to destroy it forthwith. This is what we get for sending all those convicts over (joke). (R)

CRUST *Crust LP* (Trance Syndicate)

I expected great things from this, the press release promised inspiration crossed with insanity and they had the sense to change their name from Mudhoney (to avoid confusion with Nirvana, I guess). A great disappointment! 'Diet Tray' is great, a day by day list of strange food punctuated by great insults and guitar madness, but the rest just falls flat. They'll Love You For It is the theme music from *A Hitchhikers Guide To The Galaxy* and is interesting for about five seconds. 'Rebong' fails where 'The Bong Song' by Butthole Surfers succeeds (even the bubbling sounds don't convince) and as with the Creaming Jesus LP, the samples on 'Feelings' and 'Head Lice' illustrate rather than hide the paucity of the music. Apparently on stage they give each other enemas; I really wish they'd stop arsing about. (GB)

THE EDELSE AUCTIONEER *Starfish 12* (Decoy)

Another dreadful production by Chris Nagle, the man who thinks an electric guitar is supposed to sound like one of those lumps of fluff you find down the back of the sofa. Nevertheless, there's no excusing the shoddiness of the goods on show here. Come on you Edsels, you know you can do better than this. The B side features a pub rock version of Madonna's "Borderline" (rather like Senseless Things doing a Cocteau song, but much less interesting) and their own "Coach Tour"; where the attempted use of different guitar textures is the only glimmer on this EP of the limitless potential of the Winterburn / Horner writing partnership. Their *Sonic Folk* demo is still far and away the best thing they've done (see "I Cut A Hole" on the *Ablaze!* # 6 flexi). (LN)

GREENHOUSE *Denser LP* (Native)

Good old Greenhouse. This, their second long-player (the other one, *Normless*, I haven't heard yet; hint, hint, Native...) is as full of brilliant pop tunes as we've come to expect from the Leeds four-piece; but there's so much more to this band than frontman John Parkes' sixties-tinged vocals and guitars, although those certainly put all yer Blurs and Revolvers to shame. A spirit of sonic exploration runs through this record, from the inventive samples and lead guitars (more American post-hardcore than '60s beat pop) to the "tracklets" by alter-ego group 57 Headmen which appear between the actual songs. Features the très excellent "Rules" and "Theft" as well as a wittily-edited "Ban The Car" and some spooky sexy '0898 voices. Their stuff is always so well-presented, as well, from the early Firebomb Radio One singles with their Parlophone pastiche to the space-age LP sleeves. (LN)

TERMINAL POWER COMPANY *Run Silent, Run Deep LP* (Situation 2)

Dated Goth disco dirge with horrible earnest male vocal intoning tiresome imagery. The "Respect Due" list (H.R.Giger; Burroughs, yawn; Marvel Comics, yawn; Carpenter and Cronenberg; Gibson and Barker; *Apocalypse* (sic) Now and *Taxi Driver*) tells you everything you need to know about this band. Yawn. (LN)

DEAN WAREHAM *Anesthesia 12* (Mint Tea)

A blatant Velvets imitator by any other name; the man with the whiny voice continues his inexplicably successful career in rock music by recording with Hamish Kilgour of The Clean. The A side is, you guessed it, a dead-ringer for the Velvets: without Naomi Yang's Hook-ish bass and Damon Krukowski's sensitive percussion (and, no, I wasn't a big Galaxie 500 fan), it has little choice. The stuff on the flip is better: "I Can't Wait" sounds not unlike Pavement and is much the fastest Wareham number I've heard, while "Tomato Poodle" (come again?) is a layered guitar instrumental which wouldn't look out of place on a good record, if it had one to go to. (LN)

SPROTON LAYER *With Magnetic Fields Disrupted LP* (New Alliance)

When is a concept album from 1970 reviewed in *Ablaze!*? When it's a reissue of the first recorded work by Roger Miller, he of seminal Mission Of Burma fame, and lately No Man anonymity. I've been reviewing No Man records in a positive fashion for the past two issues now, and still Roger's not Big In England. Can't work this out. As you might expect, it sounds dated in some ways, the Syd Barrett and Doors influence being particularly prominent; but in others it's every bit as "modern" as any of Miller's later stuff. The trumpet is a nice touch - when groups today use "other instruments", it's time to get the flags out, as if they'd invented the bloody things; but here you have a trumpet sitting happily with a guitar band in the most natural way possible. Just wait until you catch *Erection* and their secret trombone, that's all. Oh yes, and we'd like to interview Roger next time he's over, if that's possible. We once narrowly avoided crossing paths in Zagreb, Roger and I, but that was a long time ago and is a story which has yet to be told. (LN)

MOONFLOWERS *Groovepower/ Big Fast Dub 12* (Pop God)

I didn't understand this one. Off-the-wall, but so is mould. People are buying this group's records. They might be having us on, but I hate cynicism in the young. Are their 'mums' on it to lessen their guilt at taking drugs? Sourly middle-class. No doubt their 'mums' pretend to like it, but like the bad sleeve collage of a wet playtime, it's rubbish. Tiresome in its scraps and phrases (you get 'Big', then 'Fast', then 'Dub'), with big drums, little drums, inane chanting, gibberish, show-off guitar and the groovepower of Richard Stilgoe, it was too clever for me. A good case for keeping New Age Hippies off the dancefloors. Images of dreadlocked medical students working on an audio-laxative project. Will you wash my underpants now, mummy? I hated it. (TT)

THE AINTS *Ascension LP* (UFO)

I was put off the electric guitar for a week. Who writes press releases? I should have guessed by "like four guitarists beating each other up" that this would be the lukewarm soup it is. Nothing breaks the congealed surface: a monotony of grinding noise and shallow angst. Not bad, but somehow perfunctory and self-indulgent at once. They take themselves far too seriously. There's a star turn by a saxophone on the last dirge, but a toss-off saxophone which couldn't say squat to a stuffy cat. The gift of music is one thing. This reminded me of playing scales. It's like going all the way to Niagara Falls to wash the flavour out of a lemon. (TT)

BUFFALO TOM *Let Me Come Over LP* (Situation Two)

People who like this album will tell you that it might be basically a collection of old riffs and a dated piece of country-tinged hardcore but that the strength of the vocals and particularly the lyrics give the record a warmth and resonance which somehow transcend the drawbacks described. What they actually mean is that they know this record is crap but because they fell off their skateboard when they were ten they have momentary black-outs when even the most contrived ideas can convince. Thankfully, my mother bought me roller skates and I was brilliant on them. (GB)

70 GWEN PARTY *The Psycho Beat 7"* (Snape)

Even if I didn't like this, and I do, I would be unable to deny that it sounds different from the vast majority of the records we receive, all striving for the Indie consensus, prepared to exploit already primed audiences rather than having to go to the trouble of creating their own, hoping to make a mark before the kids get bored and look for something else. 70 Gwen Party's time will probably never come; Victor, half of 'The Party', has a whole potato field worth of chips on his shoulder about the inkies, and when this is ignored and Lush are featured every other week, who can blame him? Not much I can say in the way of comfort, Vic, except that some of us are listening and are very glad you made the extra effort. (GB) (£2 inc. p&p to Snape Records, 24 Inverness Road, Hounslow, Middx TW3 3LS.)

BLAKE BABIES *Sunburn LP* (Mammoth)

Folk-tinged college rock with (mostly) female vocals. Entirely generic, though well-executed with some strong tunes. Might appeal to fans of the late lamented Salem 66, Throwing Muses et al. (LN)

CHAINSAW KITTENS *Violent Religion LP* (Mammoth)

Well, to paraphrase the awful Green Gartside (actually the awful Stevie Wonder, but who cares?) I don't know why I love this record, but I do. Well, I quite like it, anyway. The press release threatens unspeakable horrors ("These guys colour their hair and paint their nails... they drink way too much and go to bed way too late") and musically it's little more than standard pop-punk, but there's something about it. The vocalist's phrasing, for a start, is often closer to Morrissey or Shudder To Think's Craig Wedren than any rock monster... there's something in the guitars that recalls STT's *Ten Spot*, too; though, unlike that work, this is no Great Record, merely a Good One. (LN)

HOLY ROLLERS *Fabuley LP* (Dischord)

Taut, rhythmic (dare I say Fugazi-esque? I dare) post-hardcore, the essential grimness of which is only partially redeemed by the band's remarkable three-part vocal harmonies. On the other hand, if the concept of Killing Joke fronted by Crosby, Stills and Nash sounds like something you've been waiting for all your life, buy this record. There you are... scrupulously balanced and all but devoid of personal opinion. I've been watching too much BBC election coverage. (LN)

WHIRLING PIG DERVISH *Full Feather Lovesuit 7" EP* (Gruff Wit)

Healthy Scottish kids, these Whirling Pig Dervishes, and they can do lots of mischievous things. On this power packed debut they do impressive post-guitar-reinvention punk, with no-nonsense, tell-it-like-it-is lyrics... During "A Question Of Sport", on which Marcus manages to play both the trumpet and the guitar, quite probably at the same time, Dee announces, over groovy but sad brass noises, speeding jittery guitar and angry drums: "In June 1969 the Central American football teams of Honduras and El Salvador played a series of qualifying matches for the World Cup. El Salvador eventually won, being awarded a much disputed penalty kick. Rioting broke out in the stadium and fighting spilled onto the streets. In July 1969 Honduras and El Salvador declared war as a direct result of the disputed penalty. Two thousand people died. El Salvador were beaten in the next round of the World Cup." (KA) (Write to Gruff Wit, 127 Downhill St, Glasgow G12 9DN.)

PELL MELL *Flow LP* (SST)

Absolutely incredible. Pell Mell are instrumentalists; they do pure guitar with the occasional, unobtrusive piano and a few gritty samples, creating really engaging tunes. The beauty of this record makes me uneasy on my feet; they're not droning, they're not fuzzed out, it doesn't sound overly complex, yet it works. Despite the calm grooveviness of this stuff, it's somehow shocking; going without a singer is something few bands do - it really does upturn that particular rock convention, and it's difficult not to start writing vocal lines for them even though it's so apparent that they don't need any. Want something gorgeous for your home? Get this. (KA)

JAD FAIR *I Like It When You Smile LP* (Paperhouse)

Jad Fair is the heaven-tongued child of Half Japanese and this is his first solo LP released in the UK. He is a man with insanely open, innocent eyes, and the songs on this LP are also innocent, unfussy and clear. The title track (whatever one it is) is most definitely a beautiful hit, as is "Big As The Sun", with Don Fleming's incredible singing guitarwork. There are several carefree, quirky pop numbers, such as "Surprise Party" and "Mule In The Corn", and lots of rockin' stuff too. There are 7 guitar players featured here, and Steve Shelley on a little bit of ace drums and J. Mascis on some bass, so you get the star-studded cast angle too. The only sad thing about the record is the omission of "Lucky Star". Will I ever hear this song again? Tell me, someone, please. (KA)

MOONSHAKE *Second Hand Clothes 12* (Too Pure)

A band with an odd (but admirable) sense of career. Moonshake left Creation last year, and now find themselves sharing the Too Pure's priest's hole with P.J. Harvey and Th'Faith Healers. Their only release on Creation (1991's *Gravity* c.p.) sounded great but was obviously the sound of a band trying to please both themselves and their record label. This however is the sound of a band doing exactly what they feel. Title track "Second Hand Clothes" has been radically remodelled since it was first heard live last year. An almost dub-ish rhythm section dominates, while Dave Callahan uses his unmistakable voice to launch a scathing attack on the younger inhabitants of the stockbroker belt - "Now I could sell my body to survive, start and finish work at half past five... but I won't be seen dead in second hand clothes." Each verse is punctuated by crashing guitar, taking Callahan's guitar abuse ideas from the last couple of Wolfhound's L.P.s on to fruition. "Blister" features the beautifully understated and almost aristocratic vocal of Margaret Fielder. Its rhythm is one of those impossibly complicated, but totally addictive ones. "Drop In The Ocean" is more in the mould of the title track, and yet again uses Callahan's vocals and lyrics to their fullest potential - "My name is shit around here, since I split the scene". Overall, utterly original (the Pop Group and Can are great, but I don't agree with the music press in thinking that they sound similar) and quite electric. (AC)

TUMOR CIRCUS *Tumor Circus LP* (Alternative Tentacles); *LARD The Last Temptation Of Reid LP* (Alternative Tentacles); *JELLO BIAFRA I Blow Mind LP* (Alternative Tentacles)

Jello Biafra yells on all three of these with wild differing results. For Tumor Circus he's teamed with three members of Steel Pole Bath Tub and Lubricated Goat for by far the weakest of the three albums. In fact, it's garbage. The Lard LP's best knocking around for some time now, but gets thumbs up because it has power and some songs precisely the things Tumor Circus lack. *I Blow Mind* For A Living is a collection of spoken word performances, like what Hank Rollins does but with the risible poetry, and anyone with the slightest intimation of what Jello's about will know what to expect; rants against the Gulf War, censorship and whole goddam American Dream. The guy does have a hell of a voice and his writing is certainly stylish but who buys spoken word LPs anyway? (GB)

SWA *Volume LP* (SST)

Twelve of this album's fourteen songs are either written or co-written by Chuck Dukowski. This is shame. Chuck has only got one song, you see, and one that Faith No More wrote in five minutes between singers once. Chuck's words are strange. Did I say strange? I meant crap. Like a character in Greek mythology, mute at birth but blessed with a voice, an altruistic god with a long beard on understanding that he must never stop speaking, has several side effects; most notably he never has the chance to learn any more than the twenty words the god used to explain the deal to him and everybody wishes he'd shut the fuck up. Bastards, weren't the Greek gods. Of the remaining two tracks, "Crak J" at least makes me all dewy-eyed at the thought of Stewart and "You Made A Killer Out Of Me" Anthony Hopkins singing "Riders On The Storm". (C)



MILK Tantrum LP (Eve)

Milk are a hard-rocking power trio with an inventive line in melody and arrangement which places them comfortably apart from their supposed contemporaries. Forget Camden Lurch, this is more like prime King Crimson, with a large dose of punk realism and some Albini-esque guitar heroics thrown in... in fact, with Frapp on lead, this band would be perfect. The only slightly irksome thing is Vic Kemicz's relentlessly laryngeal vocal style, though even that can't dampen my enjoyment of ditties as cheery as "Claws", "Surgery", "Girth" and "Book One, Page One". (LN)

MACHINES OF LOVING GRACE Rite Of Shiva 12" (Mammoth)

Me, I thought Nine Inch Nails were a kind of imaginary media scam (hey! anybody remember Terminal Crash Fear? Yo, Neil Taylor, respect due and all that) but it seems there's people out there who take them Very Seriously Indeed. Unequal distribution of intelligence, y'see. Blame God. (LN)

VARIOUS Independent 20 DLP (Beechwood)

They're odd, these things: I mean, you'd have thought people would already have the stuff they wanted, and probably wouldn't want the stuff they haven't. Still, they're obviously selling. Yet another indicator of how *undiscriminating* the indie kids are nowadays - not surprising, given the desperate "if it moves, hype it" mentality still prevalent on the inky bibles. Listen, inky eds and staffers, you don't have to pretend there's something exciting happening when it's blatantly obvious there isn't. We'll respect you more in the morning. All these shitty bands you've stuck on your covers! You ought to be ashamed of yourselves. A conspiracy of mediocrity - entirely in tune with the (lack of) political spirit of Major/Kinnock's Britain. Get, as I believe you say, a life.

Sorry, I'll talk about the record now. As I say, funny things, but useful in that they're the only way we get to hear half the bands the press features every week: in fact, we use them to play an amusing parlour game called Guess The Indie Band. You can probably work out how it goes. This one features "Car Wash Hair"; The God Machine's rather fine "Home"; Wonky Alice, who veer from a pleasant New Orderish northern wistfulness to something totally sixties and horrible in the space of one song; Lush (motto: "we're getting there"); and Curve (great sound, no song)... but then it also has clichéd shit such as Moose, Dr. Phibes, Midway Still and Captain America. Standing head and shoulders over the others in the crapness stakes, though, step forward Mr. Chris Roberts, whose frankly risible vocal performance on Catwalk's "Damascus" not even the reputed presence of some ex-members of Furniture can redeem. For Christ's sake, as they say, sit down, man: you're disgracing yourself. (LN)

PUBLIC IMAGE LIMITED That What Is Not LP (Virgin)

Well, it took them sixteen years, but in snapping up Virgin Records, EMI have finally welcomed Rotten Johnny back to their death-peddling multinational fireside. And, that, I'm afraid, is about as good as the irony gets around these parts nowadays, PIL having long since settled into the tedious rock band routine which Lydon was one of the first to explicitly condemn. Some of the stuff on here is OK, and sure it puts lots of today's supposed young bloods to shame for ideas, but it's so rote: not even John McGeoch's patient layering of his characteristic guitars can help Johnny transcend his sneery boredom. Poor bloke - I'm not surprised he's miserable. How would you feel if you'd changed the world irreversibly as a teenager and then had to spend the rest of your life living up to it? (LN)

JACOB'S MOUSE No Fish Shop Parking LP (Blithering Idiot)

This debut by "19 year-old Suffolk heroes" Jacob's Mouse is a mixture of undistinguished thrash pop and something more intriguing. The opening "Tumbleswan", with burbling backwards vocals, and "Twist" (some great guitar which goes "erk!") are fine, as is the Fugazi-esque "Carfish"; but the other stuff leaves much to be desired. Great title, though, in an English Whimsy sort of vein. (LN)

THAT UNCERTAIN FEELING Sunrise 12" (Dead Dead Good)

Ride meets The Chameleons, which is about as vicious a put-down as you get in my book, but they'll probably be happy with it. As, no doubt, will thousands of dipshit students if they can stomach the dreadful band monicker. Come on, do something new or don't do anything at all. (LN)

WOODCOCKS eponymous LP (Still Sane)

Downhome US roots rock thing which hasn't travelled well from Tucson, Arizona to Leeds, Yorkshire at all. For every pretty bit (the first thirty seconds of the very Neil Young-ish - not a compliment, not in my book - "Wagoner" is lovely) there's a barrel-load of predictable tosh (the rest of the song is a total cliché). Superficial hints of Television and REM and Blue Aeroplanes do not, of themselves, improve the general thumbs down vibe about this one. Wrong magazine perhaps? *Unhinged* or *Bucketful Of Brains* would probably love it and know what to say about it. (LN)

MC 900 FOOT JESUS Killer Inside Me 12" (Nettwerk)

Literate and wryly observant rap about pathological bores who corner you in a public place and won't let go of you, accompanied by bubbly Real Instruments in lots of different mixes; the Meat Beat Manifestations on the first side being my favourites. (LN)

SWANS Love Of Life LP (Young God)

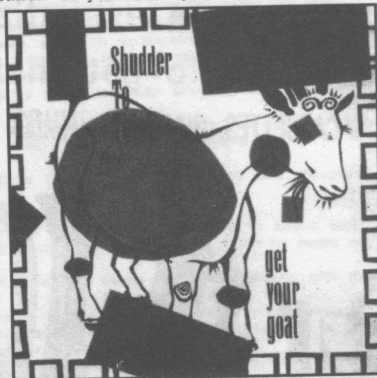
All credit to Michael Gira. Having decided, not a moment too soon, that he'd taken the non-music ethos as far as it could go (literally: *Cop* stands as a pinnacle of modern music, but who actually listens to it?) and thrown his considerable energies into remodelling himself as a singer-songwriter; he's finally arrived, after the debacle of *The Burning World* and the half-interesting *White Light...* LP. Although the music is still essentially very simple, the arrangements and Gira's increasingly melodic vocals carry the show admirably, especially on the title track and "The Golden Boy That Was Swallowed By The Sea." Elsewhere, you get Jarboe fronting the Cocteau Twins ("The Other Side Of The World"), Gira singing through a pitch shifter (I think) on "Amnesia" and even a folk protest song called "God Loves America". The snippets between the songs are fun, too - a device the Swans of yore might have found too flippant, perhaps? Certainly, listening to *Filth* (which I still enjoy) all those years ago, I'd never have foreseen Gira's chequered career. He's worked hard, and he's got better at what he does, and he wasn't full of shit in the first place: which is all any of us can hope to achieve. It's funny, though - everybody who works with him ends up swearing never to do so again. (LN)

CHUMBAWAMBA First Two CD (Agit Prop)

CD reissue of their *Pictures Of Starving Children* LP, which stands as a highly intelligent and entertaining punk rock cabaret critique of Live Aid, and *Never Mind The Ballots (Here's The Rest Of Your Life)*, which, though momentarily relevant every few years, doesn't. Some of the former is excellent, however; especially "Slag Aid". Their northern petit bourgeois accent pissakes simply have to be heard. (LN)

SHUDDER TO THINK Get Your Goat LP (Dischord)

In a decade that's already given us *Yerself Is Steam* and *Slahted And Enchanted* (not to mention *Funeral At The Movies*) it seems incredible to be saying so but - Album Of The Decade! Definitely! This is Shudder To Think's fourth LP, and the one in which they shake off all conventional pop structures, rewriting the history of music in the process by bringing about the spectacular rehabilitation of Prog Rock. You've never heard anything like this before because it's never been done before; and this week, probably for weeks to come, it's the most beautiful thing in the world. At first, it seems obtuse, but once you're inside the music everything slips flawlessly into place. Breathtaking originality: Craig's voice and stage presence are literally other-worldly. Everybody should hear this band. Go on, infernal ham-fisted inky brethren: do your stuff. (LN)



DASH RIP ROCK Not Of This World LP (Mammoth)

From Louisiana, these come on like the original hard-living bar band, all bayou blood and alligator attitudes, which could be a good thing in other hands, but Dash Rip Rock fail because they're so weedy. Shouts of "Woargh, let's go" and "Awwright" and plenty sincere sexism do not compensate for the merely workmanlike, uninflected passionlessness of these numbers. I've a nasty feeling that in some American quarters this is seen as kick-ass music, like G'n'R. The same arch mix of stompers and ballads; formulaic. No drama and no dynamic, no sense of irony and no feminine side, rock'n'roll can't get far without those, these days. *Louisiana is a dream state*, glad you think so, Dash Rip Rock (what a name!). Mayhap they're gutsy crawdaddies live, on record they're just shrimps. Hamstrung, fellas. (TT)

STARLINGS Safe In Heaven Dead 12" (Anxious)

A good student band of stomach-churning normalcy. Entirely previous, from the title down, and the singer should stop sounding as if he's taking a shit. (TT)

NIKKI SUDDEN The Jewel Thief LP (UFO)

I'm so glad this one fell to me. I'm blown away by this terrifically good album. I don't care what group he may have been in, what shape their trousers were, or if the aggregate age of the players, on here is 36000. At his best, he soars over genres like a little bird. Varied instrumentation, with Nikki's guitar songs, from doodle to rambling ballad, upfront. Words of throwaway genius; cut-throat emotion; astute musical accompaniment. It's classic subject matter: liquor, guns, ammo and carpets. Strangely the *Ablaze!* team used the word 'hackneyed' or was it 'corny'. Rock'n'roll is younger than almost anyone good. REM (minus Stipe, girls) are on here too, having a ball in your guts. Carefree, comic and tragic; if we must have "sounds like", check one B. Dylan, then GW McLennan. Fond and fair, I'll be damned if it doesn't even at times realise our striped sunlight sound. (TT)

DENIZEN The Cord 7" (In Reverie)

Marillion! Whatever will they think of next? (KA)

KING MISSILE The Way To Salvation LP (Atlantic)

This sounds so good. It's the first King Missile LP I've heard and the people who've liked them for years seem to be in a consensus that this isn't as ace as earlier stuff like *Mystical Shit*. Well if that's better than this, gimme it! "She split my head open with a pick axe, and I love it, I loved every minute of it!" John's voice is a joy to hear; he thinks so himself too, apparently, and I can't blame him, oh no, cos he's my hero and he's ace. We interviewed him and it was obvious that we'd run out of interesting questions to ask but we were drawing out the experience just to be bathed by his cute tones. (We're not the only ones: apparently people in America approach him and beg him to say the word "delicious"). "The Boy Who Ate Lasagna And Could Jump Over A Church" and "Part Two" have happy endings, "The Story Of Willy" doesn't, really. Find out which stories John wishes he knew. Hear the great laugh that opens up the first and title track, "The Way To Salvation". Hear groovy manic depressive pop with lots of jokes, but more importantly lots of profound bits. (KA)

VARIOUS Volume Two CD/Magazine (Volume)

The second of these CD-compilation-with-glossy-colour-mag-attacheds appears for review; and whilst it has its moments in both media (David Cavanagh's *Blue Aeroplanes* piece, Foetus' remix of EMF's "I Believe") there seems to be rather a lot of filler to wade through - particularly the cack-handed "humour" pages which either of the inky's weekly joke page attempts could effortlessly out-tickle. Indeed, the reliance on tried and tested inky/glossy career journals gives the whole package an extension-of-the-establishment air, like it was one of those save-the-coupons cassettes the inkyies do from time to time.

Musically, things are equally King's Reach Tower. You get Curve, Gallon Drunk, Lush, Blur, The Sugarcubes, Nine Inch Bloody Nails and so forth; a bunch of throw-some-samples-at-a-house-rhythm-and-see-if-they-stick tracks which seem to segue together as a result of all being at the same tempo; Barry Adamson, picking up another "diamond geezer" award (yes, London pals: but what does it sound like? Ersatz "orchestral" doodling, that's what) and Whipped Cream, who combine "Arnold Layne" and Queen's "Now I'm Here" to conventional but effective, er, effect. Same summary as I give all these compilation things, and that despite the extensive read herein: interesting, but I'd never shell out for it. (LN)

ACTION SWINGERS Action Swingers LP (Wiiija)

Action Swingers. They're so ugly. I wouldn't like to meet any of these at a party (then again, anything wilder than those ones that start at 4 in the afternoon and trail off around 7, long dresses dragging along over tiny little shoes, really freak me out). Hearing this actually fills me with grisly glee, causing me to wonder where the Pussy Galore has gone from my life. This is wild 'n' grungy, shit kickin' (as they sometimes say) rawk and roll and it's actually quite nice. (KA)

PAVEMENT Slanted And Enchanted LP (Big Cat)

Having sung the wrong words and given songs the wrong titles for most of a year before this LP was released in this country, it's a shock to get an official tape with the songs in a different order and some missing and two new ones. Very much. We sat up all night, a holy act, a vigil, waiting for the cassette to arrive. Bleary eyes are gazing now. This version has "Chelsey" at the end of side 1 when we'd been brought up to believe that it was at the start. It's excellent at the start of a tape because the introduction is a very convincing imitation of a cassette getting chewed up. "I am, god damn, all fall down..." "Wounded" is The Magic Roundabout: Dougal is on the roundabout and it's going round just a bit too fast; he spies Florence but can't wave. Pavement sent us messages about the sun and "Loretta's" is about the sun in her eyes and it's very lovely. This is what I thought was my favourite track (especially the ending) but I said it was "Lies And Betrayals", which turns out to actually be called "Trigger Cut", which is also an ultra song. Chris is eating himself to death, he says "It would have been better if it had never come out". We call him a fascist, and discuss the possessiveness that people have been experiencing over the band, then he qualifies it: "It would have been better if they'd left the songs in the original order." But this could be just to do with the way that most people prefer what they're used to, although like I say, "Chelsey" did seem a natural opener and "Here" a natural closer. We need an independent referee kind of person to listen to both and advise us. "40 Million Somethings" is "Two States". "No Life" has something about angels in it maybe, and "Can You Treat It Like An Oil Well?" is called "Mr Y". I really can hardly comment on the music as it's so much part of my heart. "Our Singer" is "Hip Priest", and that probably sums up. "Fame" is fab, but "Perfume" ("She's Got The Radio Active") is SUMMER, GOD SUMMER, arrgh. This LP is the best LP ever. It's their first LP after two or three years and four singles, and maybe they can't keep it up, maybe inevitably they'll get mediocre and it will hurt so much but we're not thinking about that for now. I can't analyse Pavement, when we first heard this it was like first hearing *Surfer Rosa*, that head opening, but I can't be Simon Reynolds for you and tell you what they're all about. It all could be nicer but that would be worse, the Fall were beautiful once but not quite like this, the songs aren't slurped out in any way that's ever happened before. Hear and you will be hooked, and join us in the desperate scramble this summer. (KA)

CHICKEN SCRATCH Giant And Invisible LP (Community 3); **SANITY PLEXUS** Tough Guy Shell LP (Phoenix Tree); **SKRAPYARD** Sex Is Sex LP (Alternative Tentacles); **VICTIMS FAMILY** White Bread Blues LP (Mordam)

These records grouped here crudely transform music into that lowest caste 'the medium', or 'the purveyor of the message'. Once enslaved, these lifeless, lobotomised, limping entities are the consequence. Political truth, by its very nature, is hostile to rock music because it seeks to erase individuality and craft a regimented community of worshippers of its truth. Rock's progressivist anti-status quo self-image has made it the natural home of political radicals, providing them with false comfort because they choose to ignore the nature of the beast. Music satisfies our deepest desires for revolution. It is produced by the same epoch it wishes to master. This paradox is never resolved in our own minds, thus the universal aspirations of popular music end up binding us to the period it desires us to master. The real pleasure in rock music is that of succumbing to capitalism; this is, not merely accepting war, poverty, starvation etc., but the complete expulsion of these from the mind. Political radicals in rock music can do no more than perpetuate or verify their own self-images as political radicals by churning out dreary little records like these. "Pop music or a better world. The choice is yours!" (MW)

(Thank you, Micheal, for this rather stimulating contribution - Ed.)

UNDERGROUND LOVERS Get To Notice LP (Shock); **STARLINGS** The Last One 12" (Anxious)

The press release accompanying the Underground Lovers' LP is three short paragraphs long. I'm amazed that so much could be written about so little. One knows immediately that whenever a press officer chooses to use the phrases 'intelligent song writing; thoughtful singing', the record thus described is invariably nondescript, embarrassingly lacklustre and, fortunately for those who hear it, instantly forgettable. If I was ever afforded the great distinction of writing the press release for the Starlings, I would of course mention their 'intelligent song writing; thoughtful singing'. (MW)

MIDWAY STILL Wish 7" (Roughneck)

Better produced and arranged than their last dire effort by some considerable distance, but a cliché's a cliché and life's too short, kids. The B side is "You Made Me Realise" performed in the style of The Dickies and it's going to cost them much grovelling and pleading of ignorance when they finally come up before the Big Music Critic In The Sky. (LN)

CATHERINE WHEEL Ferment LP (Fontana)

If the dire cover shot of the band hadn't already put me off (beards in rock, nein danke), the guy's voice would have done the trick just as effectively (in fact, facial hair in general - what, really, is it supposed to be all about? There's nowt much funnier than an angry policeman with a moustache). Simple trad pop songs trying desperately hard to be enigmatic; and although both the band and their apologists continually try to distance themselves from the shoe thing, the unlikely term 'sub-Ride' could have been invented for them. You'll all be judged wanting (i.e. forgotten - the unkindest cut of all) by history, anyway, musicians and mediators alike. It's like the bloody mid-eighties around here again, except then there wasn't so much good stuff being ignored, not in Britain anyway. Was that a record review? Is the Pope a Nazi? (LN)

70 GWEN PARTY Devil Wrapped And Ginsung Buried LP (Snape)

Really excellent stuff. I'd already been charmed by their "Helier Party" single and then this came along, fully forty minutes of bold sonic invention and risk-taking. *It's so nice when things don't sound like everything else.* Clockwork drum machines tap out hip-hop derived rhythms while guitars and fucked-up synths chase after Victor Ndiip's characteristic vocals; the texture ranging from utter distortion mayhem to the sweetest pools of soft light. There's a tendency for some of the songs to sound similar, Ndiip's delivery often relying on a stock (though effective) rhythmic device; but still they only ever sound like 70 Gwen Party, not like some hideous digest of the last thirty years of rock music. (Have you read the Kevin Shields interview in this issue yet? He goes on about avant garde stuff generally being pretentious, in the true sense of the word, being more concerned with *sounding weird* than reaching the emotions: I agree with him for the most part, but 70 Gwen Party do not fit that particular bill because their shit rocks. It rocks me, anyway. They just don't happen to sound like anybody else, that's all.)

Heartily recommended. Sell your Ride LPs and your Teenage Fanclub LPs and your Carter records and your dismal Primal Scream LP and invest in the future by sending £6 to Snape Records, 24 Inverness Rd, Hounslow, Middlesex TW3 3LS. (LN)

FRITZ Fly Mountain 7" (Toejam)

Recorded in a paper bag, but with raw materials like this I'm not sure a studio would have helped. A distinct lack of quality control on all fronts. (LN)

(Toejam, 11 Queen's Park Terrace, Brighton BN2 2YA)

BADGEWEARER F.T.Q. LP (Gruff Wit)

If I've said it once, I've said it a thousand times: there must be something in the water up there. How else to explain the Scottish Lowlands' eight-year love affair with Big Flame? I mean, *Big Flame*. Sure, they were great at the time, one of the best live bands I've seen without a doubt, and most of the stuff on their 7"s still stands up today - but why does everybody *sound* like them? Surely that wasn't the point. Even the Stretchheads, gawd bless their little socks of genius, have always had that indefinable Flame-y element to their music. Dog Faced Hermans started out with it, too. Not to mention The Mackenzies, Dawson and Whirling Pig Dervish. Like I say, must be something in the water. Badgewearer? No, I didn't like it much, though the lyricist could do a much better job for fellow Flame-devotees Manic Street Preachers (true fact!) than the Manics are doing for themselves. (LN)

(£6 to Gruff Wit, 127 Dowanhill Street, Glasgow G12 9DN)

70 GWEN PARTY Helier Party / Auto Killer UK 7" (Snape)

People doing something you've never heard before: there are only about ten of these records a year (including most "techno" stuff, before anyone starts) so we might as well treasure them. "Helier Party" is the hit - guitars of various colours prowl with some lovely tunes while the vocalist scowls into a fuzzbox. Sort of an early Scritti for the '90's, and I don't say that lightly even though you probably don't know what the fuck I'm on about. Come on Geoff Travis, re-release the first three Scritti records on a CD or something, let's get some *ideas* back into this moribund scene. (LN)

(£2 inc. p&p to Snape Records, 24 Inverness Rd., Hounslow, Middx TW3 3LS)

THE TONY HEAD EXPERIENCE Sleeper EP 7" (Big International)

As soon as the chorus of A side "Debbie One" came round I realised I'd heard this before on Peel, so at least it's got a memorable bit, but basically indie poodle tosh. Listening to most of the music that comes out of the south-west of Britain, you'd think it was a place where lollipops grow in the parks and the taps run with fizzy cola. (LN)

(Big International, 5 Glaston House, Glaston Rd, Street, Somerset BA16 0AL)

KLAW X-Day 7" (Dirtbag)

Sub-many things, metal for one, standard for another. (LN)

Klaw, 13A Strathleven Rd, London SW2 5JS)

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Telephone (0532 455570)

"Nipping young talentlessness in the bud"....

Yes yes, it's time for those dreadful

DEMO TAPES

SIDEWAYS (0494 783418 / 256 Berkhamstead Road, Chesham, Bucks HP5 3ET)

These sent us a whole 150g of Galaxy and put yellow stickers on their tape. They say *Abiaze!* makes them want to move to Leeds.

K: They're gonna go a long way. Who wants a cup of tea?

G: They're going to have to send hard drugs next time.

K: (popping head around door) Bryan Ferry!

G: Is he singing "I want a love life"?

L: "I want a life", more like. What a dire vocalist.

G: After Bob Mould and Mark Eitzel and Robert Forster are we really down to "I want a love life"? Fucking pitiful.

L: The second track is so bad it sounds like he's slowed the vocals down. The Ian Curtis revival starts here.

G: I think Fluff are a goth band.

What's he talking about Fluff for?

K: Chameleons. Oh, give up the Joy Division, it screws you up kids.

POND "The Pond Demo Jan '91" (081-579-6186)

Not. It would seem, the American band of the same name.. Kind of OK. Sort of Mercury Rev-ish, or Galaxie 500 or Stereolab. A Velvet Underground imitator kind of thing, with lots of dynamics.

K: Hippie monstrosity.

B: I quite like this.

L: Me too.

K: It's the kind of thing you do. (Lucy is a member of a well-known progressive rock group) You're all hippies.

L: Exactly.

G: Recorded in a phone box. It's the new fashion.

L: Sounds like a good live band though, I'd like to see these.

No song titles, no nothing. Definite Mercury Rev influence in the way the guitars get loud. They're not Up There yet, though. The songs are dead long. The third song sounds almost like guitar-led improvisation and is a very sleepy river indeed.

HOOD "3" (27 Spofforth Hill, Wetherby, W.Yorks LS22 4SE)

This one sounds pretty 'kin interesting. The songs start quiet with weird vocals, then tend to get loud. Manages to create an atmosphere and not even seem derivative when they're using the bassline from 'Bela Lugosi's Dead'.

K: I think this is going to be the token one we like. Apart from Meredith, that is.

L: Ian Pale Saint was on about these being good. Looks like he was right.

K: Pastels! (this was during a deliberately-out-of-tune vocal bit) The third song is absolutely incredible. When I win £20,000 in a junk mail competition I'll release their records. They can come round my house and eat all the tomatoes.



SISTERLOVERS "Pop-Up Machines" (P.O. Box 6, Rugby, CV21 3XW)
K: Sounds like the Buzzcocks songs that weren't written by Pete Shelley.

G: (examining band photograph) Long hair problem.

The sleeve features a tasteful collage with a packet of condoms. The mag has loads of sexist pictures of girls' thighs and arses. Steve Sisterlover says, "I am a fucking pop star in Holland and Belgium but I can't get a gig in my own country," and "You don't have to assault a groupie, you just have to ask."

B: Reminds me of a raucous Housemartins.

G: I'm not putting the other side on, and you can quote me on that. You shouldn't put pictures of women in your press release unless you've got women in your band.

VATICAN SHOTGUN SCARE (Robin, 031-556-0042)

They sent us a Christmas card, which they all signed as if we knew who they were.

K: I've already heard this and I don't like it. Sounds Euro. She sounds like she's wearing an evening dress. If she's Scottish she should sing in Scottish.

L: Makes Curve look like genius. Drab workmanlike rock.

K: Curve are quite good actually. Don't write that down.

B: The band are as tight as Gavin's pants. Oh, there's another chord.

K: What?

B: I've just spotted another chord. They need some songs. They play well.

G: "Somewhere between John Zorn and the Pixies"... only in the alphabet.

L: Somewhere between Pixies and Inspiral Carpets. Whatever that means.

LAUGHING LEN, A GUITAR GOD "Who Really Gives A Fucking Shit?" (c/o 67 Dungannon Road, Dungannon, Co. Tyrone BT71 6SE)

K: Well he doesn't sound like he's laughing to me.

G: I imagine him onstage with his underpants on his head or something. And that's not a compliment.

TSE TSE FLY "Demo 8/11/91" (Simon Cleave, 6 Carr Mills, 322 Meanwood Road, Leeds LS7 2HY)

K: (within five seconds of start) Sounds like Sonic Youth.

Well, it's miles ahead of most of the stuff we get, but they aren't exactly Fluff, are they? Mark Goodham is not as good a singer as Simon Cleave. Fluff's version of 'Selchie' pissed all over the one on here, too. The two guitars often seem to mess each other up: just because you're a four-piece doesn't mean you can't use space in your palette like you used to, dudes.

K: Horrible gothy vocals. But mention all the psychotic people walking around Leeds, inconsolable and crying.

Actually, we really love this band but this was disappointing.

A PYGMALION DREAM (RD3 Box 47, Hackettstown, NJ 07840 USA)
L: It's the Cure.

And sure enough it is. If they ever have a Robert Smith singalike contest, this guy will win it. He writes the same tune as well - you know, the one Smith's been using for thirteen years.

K: It's weird how these Americans always want to be English and English people always want to be American.

We can't decide what period Cure it is exactly.

K: It's crossed with something dodgy, like Balaam And The Angel. I'll have to find somebody who likes the Cure and give them this tape.

G: I bet they've got black, spiky hair. (Obviously a clairvoyant)

MEREDITH Demo (274 Wingrove Ave, Fenham, Newcastle)

K: Ace band! Really good band from Newcastle! Nice people.

G: This is much better than I thought it was.

L: Good tunes. Lovely bit on the chorus on the first song, the two low notes, I liked that bit. Nice guitar sound too, though the solo wasn't interesting enough to live. Kay, the singer, sounds a bit like Pauline Murray which is mildly amusing considering they live in Newcastle.

Bet you don't know what the old buffer's on about, do you kids?

K: This is rockin'. They should have a record deal.

ELATION Demo (Julian Berry, 17 Gateand Lane, Shadwell, LS17 8HR)

L: Bad Stone Roses.

G: I could find out whether this person is on Income Support, but that would be an abuse of my position. Music for people who don't like music.

K: There'll always be people who don't come up with their own ideas, and they just let the rest of us down.

L: Worst vocal I've heard for a long time. You can't sing, lad.

K: I've got a headache. I suppose we ought to listen to the second song. It might be a hip hop number.

Arf arf. One of the band is called Jeremy, the manager's called Julian and they've wasted loads of money on this insipid crap.

STARSTRUCK (Bosque Records, 25 Eyre Place, Edinburgh EH3 5EX)

L: They sound very Shimmydisc. Very, very Shimmydisc indeed; to the point of having a Jad Fair cover and a Bongwater cover on it.

A comprehensive review is out of the question here because there's about 38 songs on it and the stuff is totally diverse.

K: The cover (wallpaper and track listing printed on acetate) shows great enterprise.

KATHY FREEMAN Demo (Mark Davidson, 13A Strathieven Road, SW2 5JS)

G: Pious, self-righteous cliché. I bet she's loved and lost!

L: Workmanlike, and I'm quite aware of the incongruity of applying that term to the work of a woman, but it's just dull boysrock with aspirations towards MTV slush, especially the first track. There no reason why she shouldn't write and play like an eighteen-year old lad, equally there's no reason why we should listen to her.

THROAT Demo (Gonzalo, 105 Hoole St, Sheffield S6 2WQ)

L: "Excuse appalling sound quality" says the guy's letter. No! Why the fuck should we? That's like saying, sorry the songs are crap, y'know; we're shite, but...

K: WE DON'T LIKE THIS KIND OF THING!

(In case you're wondering, "this kind of thing" is grungy rock with shouting over the top).

L: I agree. We're the only fucking fuckers in this corrupt music press who don't push an oily mush of equivocation. *Abiaze!*, the magazine that knows where it stands.

K: Tell them to go back to school. It's like sub-sub-something-or-another.

G: I like it. It sounds like a band rather than a few mates making a demo. I mean, so do Simple Minds, but...

THE DELPHI (46 Douglas Cres, Viewpark, Uddingston.)

Bog-awful, dreamy pop. Three of the band are called Steven.

K: Is it like A-ha and Icicle Works?

G: It probably sounds like Chapterhouse. It's just one of those crappy shoe-gazing bands. It sounds like "Moving In With" being done by some shoe-gazers.

K: The Railway Children! Oh, there was a weird bit. Yes, they're trying to be a bit more spooky than that.

Happily there is some glorious stuff among the pile of bollocks people keep sending us. I mean, when we're handed tapes at gigs we can warn the donors that they are probably going to have their piss taken right out of them (at the very best), because we see no virtue in wasting the earth's resources on derivative, unimaginative nonsense, and if you've any debris floating around there in your head at all, you'll have noticed by now that we merely want to clear all that shit right out of the way, and make a bit of space for beautiful things. Value laden talk, yes, but that's the way we're built. So carry on sending those tapes - hopefully you'll be so depressed by our thoughtless comments that you'll pack it all in and find your appropriate position in life. Not that we wish to add more limits to the fulfillment of your human potential than there already are - the point is, if you're going to do it, do it properly. There are easy ways out, but they're all crap.

And don't forget: we like chocolate, money, XL t-shirts and aeroplane journeys. Make sure that all the essential details are written on the body of the cassette so we can lose the box without irreparably hindering your career in rock music... and the sticker colour for this issue is GREEN.

John Robb's got some stuff to say about
PUNK GENERATION v TECHNO BLUES

Top current clichés: "We're the new thing; we're metal with a bit of femininity..."; "There are not enough stars around these days..."; "The Punk Establishment..."; "Reviewing hip albums before hearing the record; Power-pop/punk revival.

FE-MAELSTROM: Babes In Toyland, L7, Hole, Calamity Jane: they're American, they kick ass; over here, over-wrought and overt; a femaelstrom of varying quality - some of them kick ass harder than "the boys", some are letched and dribbled over, in this tuff world the boys may be better looking, it's just they can't play as mean. Babes In Toyland are/were the coolest: Hole just seem too smart, too career-oriented... they know how to manipulate a squirming media. We know the Yanks are far better at this showbiz game than we dumb Brits: one thing though, when it comes to solos (the last domain of onstage axe masturbation, one of the last places where we men can hide from those annoying nagging women) some of these hot bitches are soloing harder and meaner, making a hideous sound not heard since the pathetic screeching of certain journalists being hauled from the bands' hotel rooms.

"STARS": Uh, "stars"... that's this year's thing, right? After the 88/92 trashing of "stars" it's been decided by the revolutionary committee that they need re-establishing; like we really need some sort of Marc Bolan figure to lead us back to our mollycoddled youth - maybe everyone's that little bit smarter now, maybe everyone knows the Pied Piper of Pop has been myopically looking up a cul-de-sac. The crowd's the star, man: techno is the biggest form of youth music in this country and that's about the vent, being there and getting enveloped in the whole thing - rock seems a little quaint in comparison clutching onto its trad format.

"POST-NIRVANA": What's this sudden biz hunger for wacky noisenik trios? Is Kurt Cobain the man responsible for shooting crap like Pearl Jam up the charts? Everyone seems to have missed the point on Nirvana: yeah, the metal fans dug them, even the brain-dead have taste sometimes, but that doesn't make Nirvana metal; so don't overload us with mediocre metal churned out by sub-Chilli Peppers outfits. A&R departments swamped the Rough Trade shop for "grunge" records: should be hilarious next year watching them trying to persuade their latest discordant acquisition to "turn metal"... there's going to be an awful lot of dead wood trapped up there in major-land "post-Nirvana".

DEATH OF INDIE: We're supposed to cheer as the watered-down guitar sludge hits the charts at the edge of the top twenty... the guitar is back! the revolution is back on! the indies have taken over!... but where is the independence? So many new bands sound like their main formative influences were reviews in the music press, bypassing the tedious business of actually "getting your own thing together" - **DEATH TO THE M.O.P.* BANDS.**

LIFESTYLE TIPS: Plotting escape from Blighty winter... *Married With Children*... Martin Millar books... *The Wedding Present* on their way to *Guinness Book Of Records*... Primal Scream live thing... Nation Of Ulysses... Henry Rollins... getting Hendrix on CD for free... Aphex Twin... Sun Ra... rediscovering Kerouac... Ken Kesey... Techno blues nights in Hulme... Guinness... P.J. Harvey... Cornershop... Teenage Fanclub... St.Etienne's Icerink label... Jmi Hendrix... finding out that it takes longer to read the *News Of The World* than the *Independent On Sunday* (William Leith, I ask you...)

* media-oriented pop

"Ex porno actor, incest survivor, 3 years without chemicals, recovering alcoholiz: Scott Bond continues to strip for God."

In this day and age, y'have to go to some serious trouble to get music journalists, with their numbed nerve endings made insensitive by the incessant stream of nonsense that pours through the letterbox each day, to actually acknowledge that your record exists. I was startled one day when, among the flat 12" mailers in the post, I found a three-dimensional 10" box, wrapped in brown paper. Excitedly I opened it, thinking how nice it was that someone had sent me a present. Inside I found... a gold candle, a 10" record wrapped in fluffy pretend leopard skin (the "bestiality sleeve") and a spiral bound fanzine on the history of prostitution. The candle was presumably meant to represent a dildo (we didn't use it due to its rather unimpressive shape); the record, "Porn Boogie", sounds (mostly) like the inside of a schizophrenic's brain while s/he is trapped in a train station and partly like samples taken from a minister's answering machine of calls from the Bangkok Gentleman's Club (this is also technically useless: you can't dance to it and you can't want to it). The fanzine was very carefully put together by Omar, it includes lots of stuck-in business cards and a sample cassette (which we haven't played) and a tissue (we haven't used this either). It is reasonably informative but it is obvious that Omar dribbles excitedly when thinking about the subject, and it only points to a consideration of the disparity in earnings between pimp and prostitute. The position of women historically, the widespread lack of other roles for women except for those of whore and wife, the fact that prostitutes would be better off being self-managed rather than being abused by men, and that in order for this to occur they'd have to be protected by the law, are all ignored.

To win this curious package, & some other goodies, we have a sexy competition. Write a story that will make our animal bits swell and change colour and emit juices. We will judge your stories in terms of their erotic content and literary style, and the author of our favourite will receive the prize. Stories judged Xmas day 1992 (there'll be nothing else to do).

(For more information, write to Spurt Records, PO Box 49, Barking, Essex.)

Julia from Ironville in Nottinghamshire and Sara from Maidstone in Kent both got the answers right to last issue's count the cats competition. Because we're so disorganised, though, we're going to have a draw on September 23rd to choose between subsequent entrants. So if you haven't got a copy of number 8 yet, there's still time. The prize is loads of records.

A GRUMBLY EDITORIAL TYPE THING

My love of music is erotic, passionate, so don't expect me, or my hand picked writers, to be dis-passionate about the records we're sent. Kindness for the others we've left behind. **HOWEVER**, music listening is invariably context dependent: you'd hate most things too if you had to listen to stuff on our clapped out old system. Perhaps it would reward the record and PR companies of London to club together and get us a new one? Just a suggestion.

The stuff in here is special, but ultimately it's all drugs, all diversions. I love the people who create beautiful sounds, and that's what I express, for what it's worth. There are also the things I do to sell, to survive; the observant among you will notice these aberrances. My attempts to turn this into a "proper magazine" have thus far failed. I have no financial resources of my own, and the continuance of *Abaze!* had been due to accumulating debts (thanks to my kind creditors) and straining muscles. If anyone wants to give me large amounts of money, I will consider their offers. I'd also like an office and some computer equipment and (most impossible of all?) motivated, intelligent women who'd like to contribute with words or graphics.

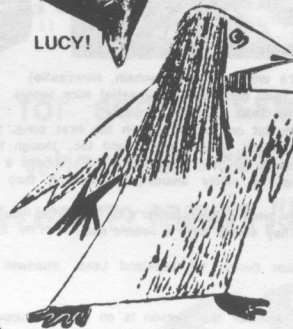
Issue 10, out in the autumn, will include interviews with STEREO LAB, MERCURY REV, PAPA SPRAIN, FIREHOSE, KING MISSILE, A.C. TEMPLE, NATION OF ULYSSES, P.J. HARVEY, CUD, MOONSHAKE, FUGAZI, BOB MOULD, CHUMBAWAMBA, BADGEWEARER, THE FALL, plus other exciting acts that we can't tell you about yet due to the irreversible nature of time.

The summer is here, and we got five more years, or probably forever, of fascist rule in this country. Let's have a revolution soon, kids. Take the power of the chaos in the noise and fuck this place up.

Kerrew A!X



LUCY!



GAV!



ME!

them COMPETITION things

Another competition: Suggest a new surname for Gavin to go with his new image, and whoever sends in the one that he really likes will get - wool a night out with the boy himself, during which you are entitled to buy him as many drinks as you like!! A damn sight sexier than the other competition's prize, we can tell you.

WE DON'T NORMALLY PRINT LETTERS, BUT WE'VE MADE AN EXCEPTION FOR THIS ONE:

Dear The Editor,
Of all the industries unfortunate minions, that is those in search of that elusive "deal", must more often than not be the most exasperated. The wealth of talent out there must be phenomenal, but as anyone in the Music industry knows, talent alone may not be enough. If your into House /techno /New Age /Soul /Jazz /Rock /Fusion or any of a stream of music tastes that don't immediately spring to mind. They all have one thing in common, an astute lack of direction. Finding the right outlet for your music has always been difficult. Incorrect A&R and Publishing will always be the straw that decides, if it wants to break the Camels back, or more to the point, your spirit. My own personal disappointment time after time, has only served to strengthen my character and at last has paid off with the recording work I'm currently doing. This is not a letter to boast about my own personal conquests but more to the point an appreciation of the hard work everyone puts into producing their demo tapes. One of the most amazing facts is that when I got the break, other doors seem to open. I suppose it's a case of being "in the know". The wealth of advice I've been given lately has been priceless, not only on where to direct my material but ways of getting it heard by the right ears. This letter is just to let those poor souls out there know that no matter how hard the going gets, 'Hang on in there'. One thing I would love to do for your readers, is listen to their material and submit their tapes to the right outlets. I hope you give your readers the will to carry on, by printing this letter. Kind regards, Richard Compton, 23a Carlisle Road, Bedford, Beds MK40 4HR

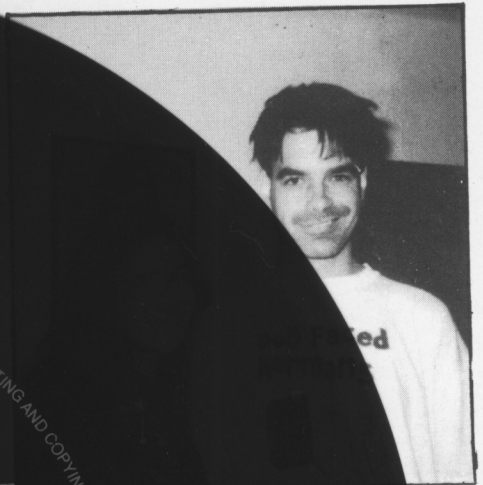
WETHERBY - It's the place to be. I'm going to tell

about the Wetherby scene even though I don't know much about Wetherby is a little village about ten miles north of Leeds which is named after the road that *Abaze!* magazine lives on. It was founded by a princess called Wendy Joyce who built the golden church among the cow meadows, and since that time many years ago the sun always shined. So it's not surprising that special bands come from there. The mother-village of Chris and Graham PaleSaint has spawned the absolutely fabulous HOOD. Their demo is reviewed elsewhere and they're soon to release a single on the trendy F label of Loughborough which is run by D, the guy who does the dodgy fanzine. Pavement fans Hood have gorgeous vocals by Ruth Chris, and they're young and cute and very tuneful, and Ian PaleSaint is one of their biggest adores. They are prolific songwriters say the least; it is said that a fully-formed classic bursts forth from their collective consciousness every fifteen minutes. Then there's the BOYCRACER, also young and cute and rather polite, and big Belgium, according to Stewart's mum. A band with plenty of potential, they took their name from the mythical title given to invading Kevs from Boston Spa driving really fast in rusty Vaux Vivas and doing wheelspins. At each gig Boycracer do one spontaneous cover which they then never ever play again; in the past they've heard to do a pretty neat version of The Ants' "Cartrouble" and "Debris Slide" too. They've already had a single out on Fluff's "Railway" - it's very limited so if you want one you'd better hurry. There'll also be a flexi, a single on German label A Turntable B and another Fluff single all in the summer. Then there's THE SPIRIT, basically a Boycracer subgroup, who play all the two songs. Boycracer refuse to do and are acoustic and jangly and specialise in Ric Menck and Paulie Chastain (Choo Choo Train, Springfield, Vex Crush) covers. Lastly but not leastly THE HARBOUR PILOTS, from Groovy Lid, the coolest person in Tockwith, are a funky r dancey guitar band. And there's a fanzine called OPEN YOUR EYES which documents Fluff type bands and has interviews with The Fallers and Pavement. So don't be surprised to see a proper feature on the goings on in this hip town next issue.

8 STEPS TO AN ITCHY BUM

a wet and wild surf recording from the actual surfing wedding present

And you thought they were only releasing two LPs and twelve 7" singles this year! Well, here's the flexi, an aberrant 7" number 13 if you like, featuring a track which won't appear on any of their other releases, ever. It's called "Undercurrent", it's a cover of a song by The Pacific Surfers (check *Surfin' Wild*, on Hot Rod records of Rio De Janeiro, if you wanna hear the original). It was *nearly* produced by Jimmy Miller (of "Honky Tonk Woman" fame), except he was out of the room at the time. But, best of all, it's an instrumental. Maybe their first ever! Hear them transcend their past yet again with this gorgeous surf melody.



But wait, there's more to this you may immediately realize. The Present people have moved on to mar-

A.C. TEMPLE

among you will remember that Paul Dorrington was a Temple bandist in a previous incarnation, when they used to sound like Basic Youth (Jok Temple have never really sounded like anyone, but journalists are not renowned for listening to their ears). The song here is "Miss Sky", but a different from any you have ever heard before. The original mix can be found on their *Sourpuss* LP, a record of pure pop wonder, firmly placed in the list of Ablaze! favourite five records ever ever ever. So you can imagine that it's quite a thrill to be presenting this airborne slice of beauty to you. Listen.

What to look for in summer: complete your Temple collection with *Songs Of Praise*, *Blowtorch*, *Sourpuss*, and their most recent masterpiece, *Belinda Backwards*. The Templettes are currently deciding which record deal to sign, and are hoping to bring you more special happiness soon.



5-7 BROWN ST
MANCHESTER

PICCADILLY RECORDS

PICCADILLY RECORDS